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ABSTRACT

This book is a case study of one English community education center during the 1970s and a little beyond. It introduces the building, Sutton Centre; the town, Sutton-in-Ashfield, North Nottinghamshire; community education; and the period of time in which the story is set. Nineteen chapters concentrate upon the actions and the arguments that took place as the feasibility study, planning, and development for the center progressed. The whole range of public services that were brought together under the center's roof are discussed in the order in which they appeared in the history of the center. The services include the secondary school, recreation center, and specialized agencies. How the center attracted attention to itself and to the town is discussed. Another focus is the challenge that the center presented to the public sector to resolve its problems and bring forth more of its potential. An important part of the book is its emphasis on the major political and economic changes that took place during the seventies. Thus, the story also involves how the building, and especially those in it, responded to changes in the meaning and financing of care--the quality of their reactions as well as their actions. The final chapter discusses issues that were raised by the sense of innovation that the building represented. Two sets of issues are included: those posed by the building itself and those promoted by it. (YLB)

NOTTINGHAM ADULT EDUCATION RESEARCH REPORTS

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THE CHALLENGES OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION

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by
Colin Fletcher

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Department of Adult Education, University of Nottingham

THE CHALLENGES OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION:

A BIOGRAPHY OF SUTTON CENTRE

1970 TO 1982

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The Final Report,
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For Tony Williams who taught me to build,
Lyn Fletcher who made this book with me
and Ralph Ruddock for his approach to buildings
and to books.

Acknowledgments

I record with gratitude my debt to the very large number of people who have helped in this research.
They include:-

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The British Council who enabled visits abroad.

The staff, pupils, parents and participants at Sutton Centre upon whom the quality of this study properly depends.

The residents of Sutton-in-Ashfield who welcomed an inquisitive stranger in their midst and were willing to teach him.

The staff of the Sutton Centre Research Project, Diana Palmer and Sandra Hufton, whose loyalty and industry transformed a one-man band into a tuneful trio.

Sean Sprague who took photographs at regular periods to provide an independent visual commentary. Sean first contributed to the spirit of the project in 1977 by mounting an exhibition at which we met members of the public. The exhibition was shared with pupils and other members of the Centre in following years. Sean shared his skills more with every visit.

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Dr. J.E. Thomas of the publications committee at Nottingham University Adult Education Department and John Rennie of the Community Education Development Centre, who strongly supported the study being written as a story.

Despite all this good work, goodwill and wise counsel errors remain. The errors, I claim, are my own.

CONTENTS

Chapter:	Title:	Page Number(s)
Introduction		
One	A Town to the North	1 - 7
Two	Sutton and the Growth Zone	8 - 16
Three	The Making of a Feasibility Study	17 - 28
Four	The Feasibility Study 1970/71	29 - 44
Five	Down to Detail: 1971/73	45 - 60
Six	A New Mark on the Map	61 - 69
Seven	1973 And The School Opens	70 - 79
Eight	The Formative Years	80 - 95
Nine	Down the Runway	96 - 112
Ten	The Centre Takes Off	113 - 130
Eleven	Welcome Aboard	131 - 144
Twelve	The Contrasting Styles of Care	145 - 165
Thirteen	The Recreation Section	166 - 184
Fourteen	The Edges of Success	185 - 200
Fifteen	Recreation 1977-80	201 - 229
Sixteen	The Minor Parts 1977-80	230 - 249
Seventeen	The School: 1977 - April '78	250 - 262
Eighteen	The School: 1978 - 1980	263 - 282
Nineteen	To 1983	283 - 297
Twenty	The Issues Raised	298 - 317

INTRODUCTION

This is the story of a building, an extraordinary piece of public architecture. It concerns Sutton Centre in North Nottinghamshire. Sutton Cente is a community education centre and it was built right in the heart of Sutton-in-Ashfield. There are, then, four introductions to be made: to the building, to the town, to community education and to the period of time in which the story is set.

A whole range of public services were brought together under one roof. The largest service is a secondary school which, like a beating heart, pumps round 1,200 pupils and their teachers. The second largest service is a Recreation Centre which takes over the school's sports facilities in the evenings, at weekends and during school holidays. There are specialised agencies as well as these provisions for pupils and the general public. The agencies include Probation and Social Services, Adult Education, Youth and Community and Careers. All these functions were added to the school. They added so much more that the Centre became a complex, a much larger whole in which the school was to become heavily involved and with deep effects. The building set the stage for many dramas to take place at the same time. People from all over the country were attracted to work in it.

The building and its occupants brought attention to the town. Sutton-in-Ashfield has no great historical significance but it does have a thriving market-place. Many of its adults work in coal mines, in hosiery factories or in light engineering. These kinds of work have well established cultures yet they also face the troubled prospects of decline. The creation of Sutton Centre was intended to help attract new industries to the town.

But being a community education centre caused issues all of its own. The building was a direct challenge to the public sector to resolve its problems and bring forth more of its potential. The vital problems came in different forms. There were questions of efficiency and public participation. Each service had statutory responsibilities and was expected to introduce successful innovations. How would being in a Centre, a complex, affect these expectations within each service? Further, the school came into being as a community school. Its staff were determined to develop new kinds of courses and relationships. They intended to introduce comprehensive learning, lifelong learning, into the town. This commitment to being outgoing put the school on a test-bed alongside the other services. What cooperation could take place between the services in the name of Sutton Centre and in the cause of community education? What, after all, did community education mean in detail and in day-to-day life?

It is at this point that the decade of the seventies should be introduced. There were major political and economic changes throughout the country as a whole. The *'seventies'* have yet to be given a name like the *'hungry thirties'* or the *'swinging sixties'*. As far as the public sector is concerned there was the decade of the 'caring seventies', there were huge shifts in the meaning and financing of care. And so the story also involves how the building, and especially those in it, responded to these changes; the quality of their reactions as well as their actions. The actual framework of this account, the benchmarks of its chapters, depends upon the dynamics and dilemmas of the seventies.

The book's title is intended to cover two meanings of the matters described. First a definite challenge was made by the building of Sutton Centre, a defiance to tradition and with it a claim for something new. Secondly there is the question of evidence and expression of doubt, the less firm meaning of the word challenge.

What follows is a case study of one English community education centre during the seventies,and a little beyond,which weighs the evidence and judges the claim. The challenges are not continously spelled out but are raised as issues in the final chapter. All the preceeding chapters concentrate upon the actions and the arguments taking place. There are hidden messages, not generalisations, in a case study. Such messages have also been made more muted because the story is a personal account rather than a scientific study. I hope that it is generally readable and for that reason all the footnotes and technical information have been cleared out of the text and separately printed.

At the risk of spoiling the story may I finish by saying that the Centre is a success but that its success, like any other, is only made good by constant struggle and effort. This opinion is widely held amongst the lowliest of participants and the most senior councillors and officials in regular contact.

A badge at a recent Open Day read *"I've been to the Bunker and survived"*.

The Clerk and Chief Executive Officer of Ashfield District Council wrote in May 1983:

> *"I am a firm believer that the Sutton Centre project has been a success, especially from the District Council's point of view. Almost 300,000 people use the Recreation Centre each year. We have problems with only a very small handful and the Centre is used without being in direct conflict with other amenities and provisions made by the District Council in the near vicinity".*

How these opinions could be arrived at, and indeed what they actually refer to, you can find in the text, photographs, drawings and newspaper cuttings which follow. It is my greatest hope that you feel you have enough corroborative evidence to make up your own mind.

Colin Fletcher

Cranfield College of Technology

June 1983.

CHAPTER ONE: A TOWN TO THE NORTH

> *"Sutton-in-Ashfield makes no great historical claims.... Sutton was on the route to more important larger towns and was frequently passed through by Royalty of ages past".*
>
> *Plaque on the Central Library wall.*

There are small towns all over the world. Indeed it is often said that small town life is the same the world over; that they are the modern version of villages. Inward-looking and cushioned from the worst effects of depressions and wars, their inhabitants canny, comfortable and complacent. And so although all towns have their different stories, accounts might only be of interest to the people living in them. But no town, as far as I know, has had quite such an intense experience as Sutton-in-Ashfield during the 1970's. A community education centre was built right in the middle. A lever was pulled against the town's gradual decay. The question is 'did it work'? [1]

Teversal village.

People from all over the world now come to see Sutton Centre - teachers, politicians and even ambassadors. But what would they have understood about the town in 1970 when Sutton-in-Ashfield was just another of the world's small towns?

Sutton-in-Ashfield is a small town in the East Midlands.[2] London is 140 miles away to the South, Sheffield 30 miles to the North and Lincoln 40 miles due East. The Midlands have gently rolling hills. One piece of local folklore is that Huthwaite has the highest place between there and the Ural Moutains in Russia.

There are 48,000 people living in Sutton-in-Ashfield, most of whom have lived there all their life and many of whom would not live anywhere else.

Very little is known about Sutton before the Elizabethan period. It is thought to have been brought into being by clearing a space around the springs where the river Idle first appears. For the next three centuries a hamlet grew into a village with the Parish Church of St. Mary's overlooking the Idlewells and the market square alongside them on the lowest and most sheltered slope. All the surrounding land was part of a great estate, that of the Earl of Shrewsbury at Chatsworth. Great estates and lesser manors were strung together from Annesley Hall to Newstead Abbey (ancestral home of Lord Byron) to the Duke of Portland's Welbeck Abbey and away to the north through Rufford Abbey, Thoresby and Clumber. Sutton-in-Ashfield was one of many small settlements in what the ordinance Survey Map even now refers to as "*The Dukeries*". The parish church records survive and show the patronages of the Lords of the Manor and the names of their tenant farmers who became St. Mary's Church Wardens.[3]

Almost any crop will grow in Nottinghamshire but the land is most suited to barley, kale and potatoes; plants which fatten sheep and pigs. Nottinghamshire is on the most southerly edge of sheep farming and the northern edge of pig farming. The sheep farming led to

St. Mary's Church.

wool knitting and the pig keeping to bacon curing and black puddings. To the east is flat and fertile Lincolnshire, more suited to vegetable growing. Leicestershire, the next county to the south, produced a cheese from its more lush pastures. Nottinghamshire, therefore, having its own distinctive mix of farming had complementary and more specialised neighbours.

Sutton-in-Ashfield's market place, though, would not have reflected such a broad map until very recent times. The earliest development out from its agriculture must have been knitting. Streets of special houses, three stories at the front and two at the back, were the independent knitter's workplace and a home for his family. The unusual shape and the wall of windows at the top told the passerby where the knitter worked at a hand loom. In the early 1800's some of the knitters became Luddites; they set out at night to smash the looms in which local tradespeople were investing, looms put in rows and powered by steam and fuelled by coal being mined nearby. Men from Sutton are known to have gone secretly to Nottingham and destroyed looms there too.

Before long, though, whole families worked for low wages in factories, the demand for handloom work slumped and Sutton had a 'poor'-house. Whole families went out to work at factories owned by men whose names sound more substantial if said in a strong East Midland's accent, Samuel Eden; Tudsbury's; Morleys and Scott and Slack. Knitting remained a man's work; practically all other jobs were done by women and children. Coal from the surrounding countryside came into the town as energy for its engines.

Men coming off the morning shift at Sutton Colliery.

Each of its neighbouring villages had pits; 'B' Winning, at Huthwaite, Sutton Colliery at Stanton Hill, Silverhill at Teversal and also Teversal Colliery itself, the oldest surviving pit in the county of Nottinghamshire. Migrant workers came from the North and West, men came to the pits and a pit-house; their wives often taking work in hosiery factories.[4] Sutton-in-Ashfield is almost always described as a mining and hosiery town.[5]

Pretty Polly stockings

Women going into the Afternoon Shift.

Around these staple industries grew the shops and services, like furnishers and builders, which make small towns nearly self-sufficient. Sutton's old established businesses like Bristol's furniture store and Searsons the builders were founded between 1900 and 1920.

Those who owned shops and industries were a class apart, their close allies being the few professionals who, like them, lived and worked in the town. The division between classes in hosiery works was no less clear cut than that between owners and colliers in the mines. The difference came from local owners living locally in the spacious substantial roads between St. Mary's Church and the market place. Later big houses were to spread steadily up Station Road towards the farmlands of Coxmoor. Like the aristocrats before them, the middle and owning class formed a mini-Dukeries within the town itself.

The Work peoples Inn, Huthwaite.

Engineering firms followed this pattern to a point. Meanwhile a trade skill founded works to make hosiery machinery and supply special tools. A tin can-making industry grew to service the vegetable producers of Lincolnshire. Again the owners-entrepreneurs were local and lived locally. The works brought into being, the new status of the time-served tradesman and attracted workers from much further afield. Whilst the miners had pit-houses and then council houses, engineering factory workers appeared to have aimed to own their own homes. Small estates of semi-detached houses, almost the hallmark of the 1930's, often had the same mock Tudor appearance of the owners' houses in the St. Mary's area. As the work-force of mining and hosiery was very much locked together by family, street, pit-house, council estate and miners'

welfare the engineering factory workers social position was like their housing - towards the outer edges of the town. Nevertheless, they became Suttonians. By learning to speak the dialect they learned the town's way of thinking.

Much of the dialect is the same as that of Yorkshire or Derbyshire. A Yorkshireman's advice to his son is a straight-forward instruction to be self-centred:

See all, hear all, say nowt,
Eat all, drink all, pay nowt,
And if ever thar does owt for nowt,
Allus do it for thisen.

Nowt, owt and thisen are everyday words in Sutton. Owners of factories would use them when speaking to their workers; they had that northern, provincial rough and readiness in common. Quite possibly owners used a broad accent when they wanted to cajole workers. For the speech is firm and friendly. "*Ay up m' duck*" and "*ow reet yoth*" are often called out by adults across streets. Some people are conscious of how old-fashioned phrases like "*a lass on th'arm* " can sound. The same people are just as likely to thicken their accent with strangers. There is an air of "*that's how we are*", "*we can't do much about it and we wouldn't want to anyway*". People busy to the point of near exhaustion are "*fair-thronged*", a clear image if ever there was one. The accent and the dialect words are what people have in common. They are strong enough to bridge the wide divisions between owners/professionals and managers on the one hand, and workers on the other. Sutton people would also be able to take into account their knowledge of where the speaker lives, be it council estate, terraced street, new owner occupier estate or big private house.

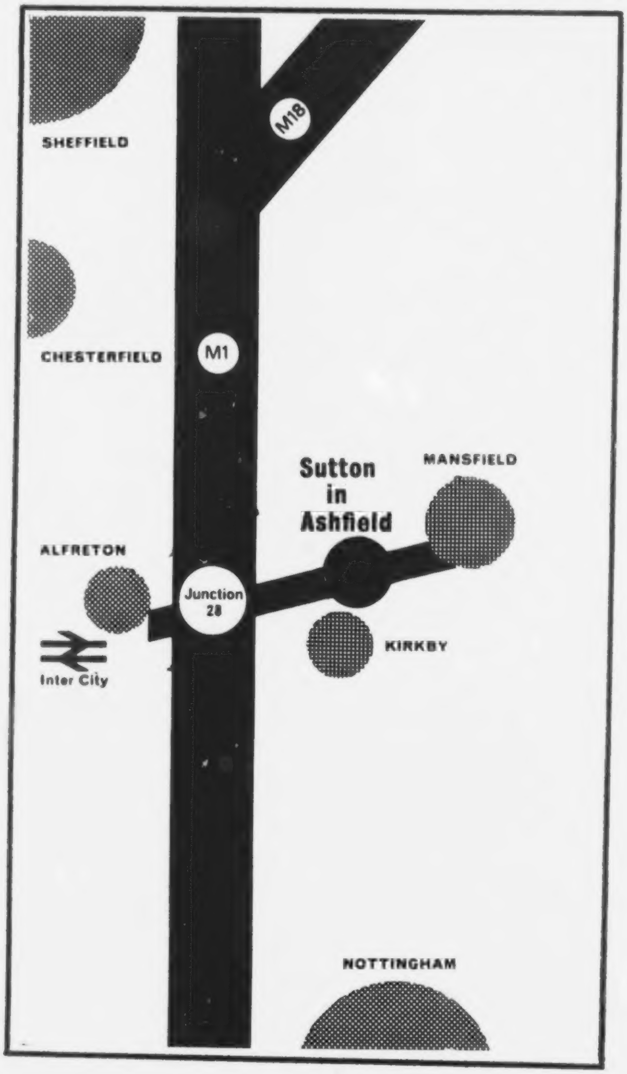
Four replies to the question "What's Sutton like?" were,

> "I'm a Sutton man through and through. I've been all over the world and I've always come back. It's a great little town I think. You've got everything here. You're near to Hardwick and Sherwood Forest and there's the Lawns."

> "Sutton rough? I don't know, Mansfield's rough, it's dog rough."

> "Sutton's broad, you know it's right common, 'wur is it?', they say."

> "Sutton's north really, just a few miles to Derbyshire one way and a few to Yorkshire the other. People always have trouble with the accent. It's just Sutton really."


SHEFFIELD
M18
CHESTERFIELD
M1
Sutton in Ashfield
MANSFIELD
ALFRETON
Junction 28
KIRKBY
Inter City
NOTTINGHAM

CHAPTER TWO: SUTTON AND THE GROWTH ZONE.

> *"the individual can understand his own experience and gauge his own fate only by locating himself within his period, by becoming aware of all those individuals in his circumstances. In many ways it is a terrible lesson; in many ways a magnificent one".*
>
> *C. Wright Mills.* [1]

The Lawns with Morley's Factory behind.

Sutton Urban District Council was formed in 1932 by *'uniting'* the mining villages of Skegby, Stanton Hill, Teversal and Huthwaite with the hosiery town.

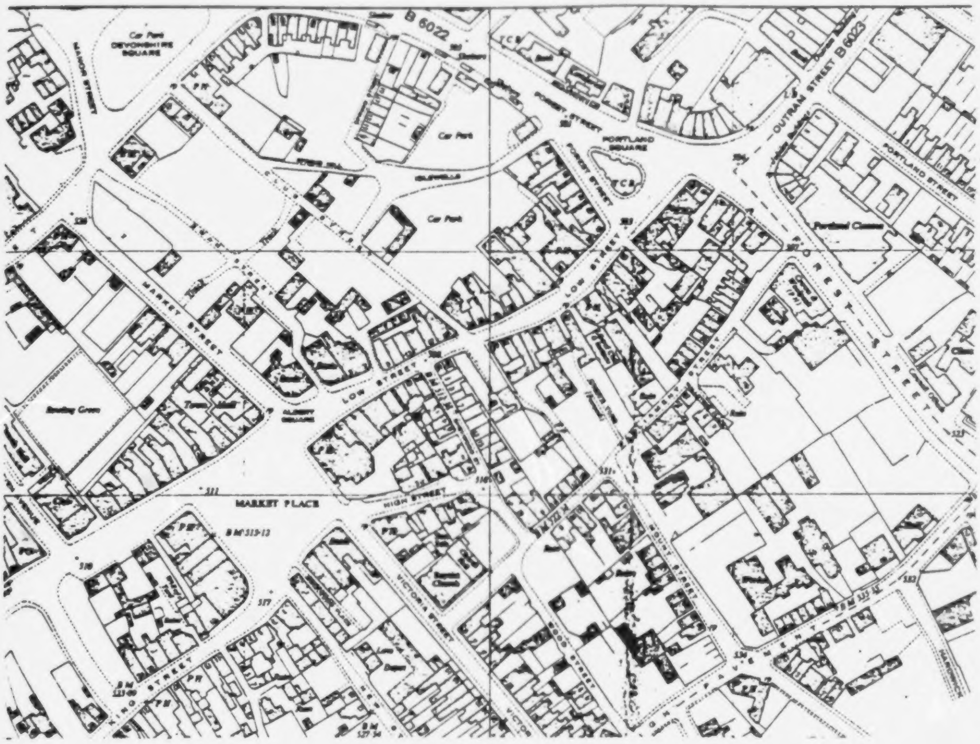
By the 1930's the town's shopping area was shaped something like a mace, the handle of which ran down Outram Street. The club-end had the market square in its middle and an outer limit of Portland Square and King Street. Going to Sutton meant going to the market and the possibility of calling in and out of Outram Street's shops. Between the market and Outram Street ran Low Street, a narrow '*wynd*' flanked by decay. Behind Low Street were Sutton's most run-down houses.

On one side, the Idlewells, most of the houses had been cleared in anticipation of a plan drawn up in 1935. But the plan was deferred leaving road-ways and rough land for free central car parking. The area on the other side took its name from Parliament Street; the area was a mixture of terraced houses and business premises.

In 1955 the County Council Engineer-Surveyor drew up fresh plans and by 1958 Sutton Urban District Councillors were clamouring for concrete proposals.

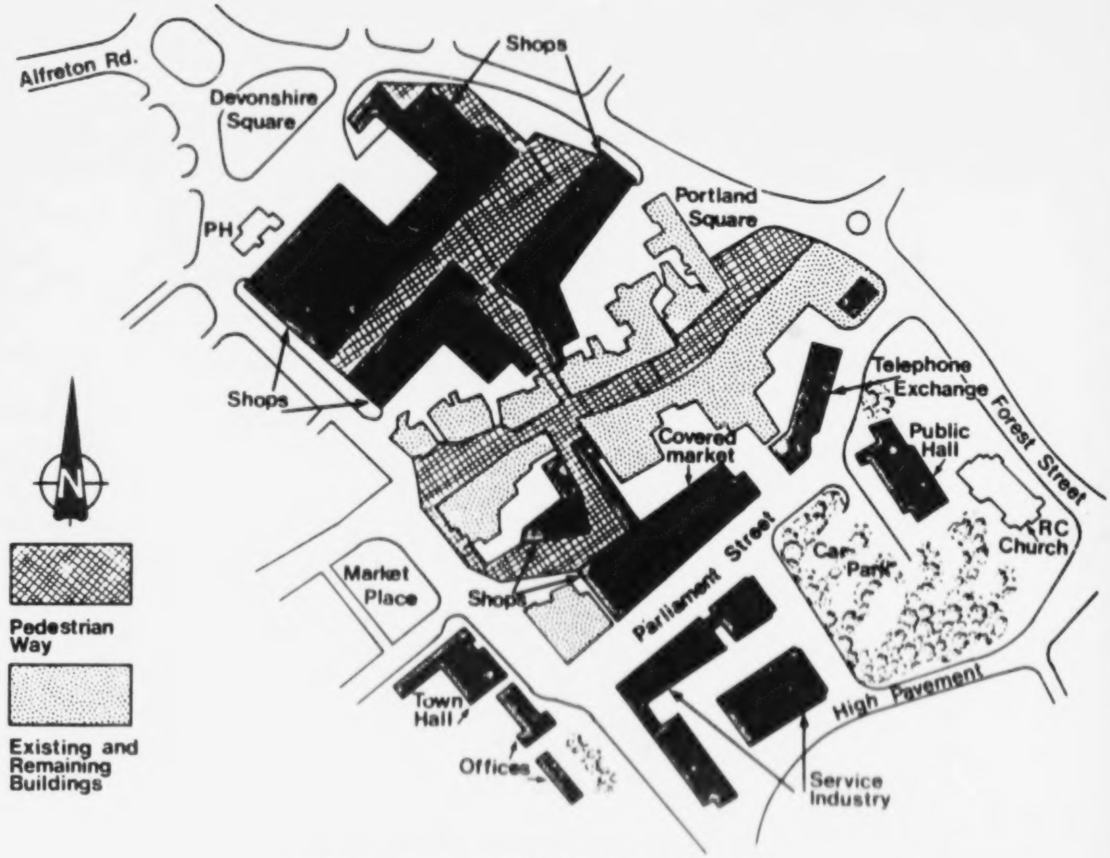
"Twenty years of '*eyesore*' was long enough. They wanted to clean up the town. They had a vision of a bright, prosperous and pleasant place in which to live. People in the streets were asking them when something would be done. The time had come to change emphasis from building council estates to re-building the town and making a centre with new municipal buildings. There was no town hall." [2] In 1959 the 'slum clearance' of Parliament Street began in earnest. In 1960, however, a development company executive proposed that a shopping centre be built on the Idlewells rather than Parliament Street. The Highways and Town Planning Committee agreed. The Editor of the local and long established paper the Notts. Free Press commented:-

> *"...and meanwhile Parliament Street is being demolished. Traders in the area are sweating about the future prospects of their businesses and still more wide open spaces are appearing in the town."*


B 6022
Car Park
DEVONSHIRE SQUARE
Car Park
Car Park
MARKET STREET
LOW STREET
Bowling Green
Town Hall
ALBERT SQUARE
MARKET PLACE
BM 319·13
HIGH STREET
VICTORIA STREET
KING STREET
FOREST STREET
PORTLAND SQUARE
TCB
OUTRAM STREET B 6023
PORTLAND STREET
Portland Centre
FOREST STREET
LOW STREET

SUTTON'S CENTRE IN 1961.

The Parliament Street area was indeed steadily cleared and the determination of the Council brought forth opposition from the Chamber of Trade. In the November of 1962 there was a Public Enquiry to examine the plans and hear objections to it. The plans clearly showed the Idlewells being shops and service yards, whilst the Parliament Street was shown as having a covered market, a telephone exchange and a public hall along its pavements; a tree-lined car park and service industry tucked in the bottom south western corner. The new town hall and civic offices would be directly at the top of the market place. Only the four churches and one pub on the edge of the area would be left standing.


Alfreton Rd.
Devonshire Square
Shops
PH
Portland Square
Shops
Telephone Exchange
Forest Street
Public Hall
Covered market
RC Church
Car Park
Parliament Street
Market Place
Shops
High Pavement
Town Hall
Offices
Service Industry
N
Pedestrian Way
Existing and Remaining Buildings

CENTRAL AREA PLANS IN 1965

Although the Inspector appeared to go along with the Council's plans, his recommendations actually removed all the buildings intended for the Parliament Street area.[3] The covered market was included in the Idlewells and the telephone exchange was put on the other side of High Pavement. The Public Hall, Council Offices and Town Hall were all deferred. Sutton Urban District Council formed a development committee led by its chairman and local headmaster Councillor Tommy Stimpson. Cllr. Stimpson's closest colleague was Cllr. Fred White and also another of the town's secondary school headmasters. The development committee was small and very powerful - it had powers to decide upon almost anything apart from raise a rate for itself.

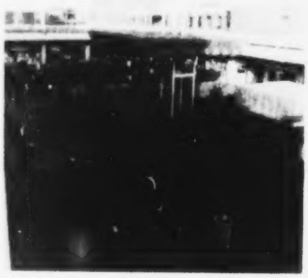
Steadily still, the development committee rejected the first two development companies and fought off a High Court Action about to be brought by the second company. As the plans became more detailed the committee was asked to include a new library and a banqueting suite in a corner of the shopping centre. The council was also providing the covered market and multi storey car-park too. But they had hoped for much, much more. Their development companies spoke of a leisure centre on Parliament Street later but they all wanted to get on with the Idlewells shopping centre first.

Throughout the 1960's the editor of the Notts. Free Press had spurred on councillors with phrases only acceptable from a local person to local people. His "Random Shots" included remarks about "*This wreck of a town*", "*The ruins of Pompei*", and "*Polopolis - a town with a hole in the middle*".

The jibe of '*Polopolis*' was all the more pointed because of the town's changing shape. For the demolished centre was becoming an even more obvious contrast with the money being spent on the new estates of owner occupied houses being built between the town and its villages.

Some of Sutton's working class aspired to greater things; they sought middle-class manners and possessions. Even though their roots were in Sutton they could well branch out elsewhere. To put it bluntly the money of young and ambitious people would be spent in Mansfield and uphold Mansfield's big brother status. Then local traders could well demand a drop in their own rates. The "*nouveau riche*", to come right out with it, might lead the exodus from Sutton. Sutton's councillors could see that their problems were closely related to each other; these problems were so severe that they were more often sensed than spoken.

The Labour-controlled Council, undisturbed by periodic elections, wanted to do more than just tidy the place up. The councillors wanted something modern, something brand spanking new.[4] Councillor Fred White had in mind "*first class shopping*", "*really good stuff*". If the centre was bright and cheerful then perhaps the coal and hosiery industries could be persuaded to reinvest - even new investment might be attracted to the area. Sutton had to be made good enough for its "*nouveau riche*" and its newcomers too. Until the Idlewells scheme all the signs pointed in the opposite direction.



The councillors fears were real enough. In 1963 Sutton's last remaining railway station was closed and from then on only coal travelled from and through Sutton by train.[5]

The pattern of pit closures in Nottinghamshire is from west to east and north to south and Sutton is in the north-west corner of the coalfield. Although some coal could still be mined it was becoming uneconomical to extract. Before too long Teversal Colliery and then Sutton Colliery would close.

From the end of the Second World War the hosiery industry had throughout Europe been taking a hammering.[6] It was no longer the case that with 1900's machinery and a skilful workforce firms making socks, underwear, swimwear and knitwear could continue to make a modest profit from selling in bulk to major multiple stores. Many family businesses had been taken over by one large group, Mansfield Hosiery, which had then rationalised with new machinery and needed fewer workers. The few remaining small firms could not compete with imports from countries where raw materials and labour were cheap. Some of these foreign countries had actually been helped by the export of hosiery machinery directly from Sutton.

People in North Nottinghamshire are not given to extreme reactions and exaggeration. They did not say "*the writing is on the wall*" or "*the twin pillars of our economy are about to collapse*". But the decline of traditional industries was openly discussed. And so, in the late 1960's, while Sutton councillors were busy with the plans of their shopping centre, plans on a broader canvas were being prepared.

In 1965 news of significant national plans had been given to the Chamber of Trade by Sutton Council's Engineer and Surveyor:-

> "*Mr. Molyneux told the traders that the M.1 motorway would play a great part in the future prosperity of the town. It was doing, in fact, what the railways did in years gone by. The M.1 junction 28 would be at South Normanton - only two miles from the town centre*".

The arrival of the M.1 gave impetus to a regional plan. By the end of the 1960's Sutton Urban District's town centre plan was really just one of a number of schemes for the town. Sutton-in-Ashfield, it seems, could now find itself in the strategic middle of a '*growth zone*'.

Because Sutton and the surrounding towns and villages would have so many problems, a corridor of land between Mansfield and Alfreton had been designated as a growth zone. The area was given intermediate status for the purposes of regional aid.[7] Unlike Wales, the north-west and the north-east the growth zone did not need help because it was in a mess but because the cluster of small towns together had a city's population which would have a severe shortage of work in twenty to thirty years time. The growth zone idea was developed by Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire County Councils to prevent the collapse of their northern small towns. With regional aid they could offer incentives, build roads and lay on services like electricity and water.

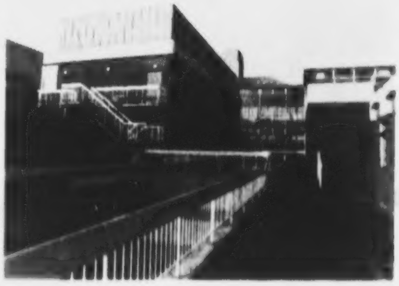
GOD SAVE OUR QUEEN

A new boom was planned on paper. Each existing town was to specialise in certain services. Sutton, being between the towns at either end of the corridor would be particularly suitable for housing the sporting and recreational facilities. The area of sixty square miles, five towns and many more villages had a total population of 187,000 in 1969. The Interim Master Plan for the Growth Zone anticipated that the population "*could almost double by the end of the century*". In this plan the buildings from Sutton's reservoir to Outram Street would have been entirely cleared and become a "*green wedge*" and an "*intensive, urban recreational area*".

The Growth Zone Plans were moving with the times. The M.1 motorway had extended beyond Sutton-in-Ashfield, some three miles to the west, by 1970. British Rail would recognise the zone by opening, in 1972, a Parkway type station making an inter-city connection to London a two and a half hour journey. With railway and motorway to the west, advanced factories were built for industries who could be attracted by the area's intermediate status.

The Idlewells opened in 1970. Sutton Urban District Council had attracted one million pounds of capital investment. The two local headmasters had become the key councillors, their small development committee had met in secret and reported to the full Council when choices had been made and cash had to be spent or raised. Sutton Urban District Council committed at least one million pounds of its own money to the Idlewells. It was their first experience of partnership and co-ownership. A building had gone up in Sutton bigger than its town centre pubs all put together. Until the Idlewells all the town's buildings had been made for a single owner and a distinctive purpose.

The Idlewells had London letting agents for its barn and garage-like spaces. Sutton's councillors wanted a modern centre more than any other project elsewhere in the district - they had to in order for it to happen. Now they had the waste-land of Parliament Street too.



The point cannot be made too strongly that it seems that no-one was prepared to have Sutton die a slow economic death. There were the economic incentives of of intermediate status and there was the "*infrastructure*"; the fast road and rail services. Industrial relations were "*good*" too. There were purposes being set for Sutton by the Urban District Council, the County Council and the Notts/Derbys. Sub Regional Study Group. Between Sutton and Alfreton acre upon acre of land was allocated for factory space. In the centre of Sutton itself eight and a quarter acres of prime land, so recently cleared, would not remain an open space for long.

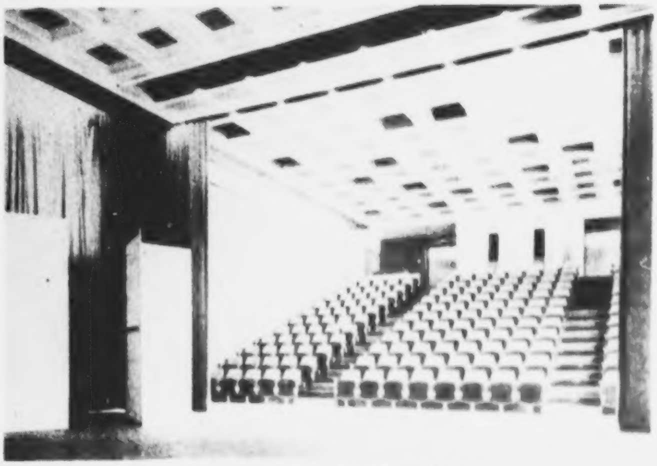
CHAPTER THREE: THE MAKING OF A FEASIBILITY STUDY: 1970.

> *"In this world there is more often fear of one infuriated enemy than confidence in ninety and nine friends who cause no anxiety".*
>
> *Holmes.* [1]

All kinds of forces combined in the year 1970. The initiative to create a community education centre was taken by the County Council. Sutton Urban District were prepared to donate land and contribute money to the scheme. The Department of Education and Science agreed to the planning of a new school whose very siting and design would break many conventions. The site was the Parliament Street area and the Feasibility Study laid before the two Councils said repeatedly that it would be difficult to tell the school apart from everything else in the centre. Just why were different interests so readily prepared to agree to such an unusual proposal?

The idea came from County Council officials and it was a point towards which they had been reaching for some time. In 1968 the County Council had piloted a partnership with the district authority in the town of Bingham. The term "joint-use" had been coined to describe the results of a progressive agreement over funding. The term really refers to the activities which result from a co-ownership deal. The Education Committee says it is going to build a school and asks the district authority if it would like to have local ratepayers use the sports facilities out of school hours. If the local authority agrees then it contributes money towards better facilities; better than those possible within the expenditure limits fixed by the Department of Education and Science. The education authority may gain a cheaper swimming pool, part of a sports hall and a contribution towards staffing costs. The district council may wish to extend the range of facilities and include others, like a separate bar.

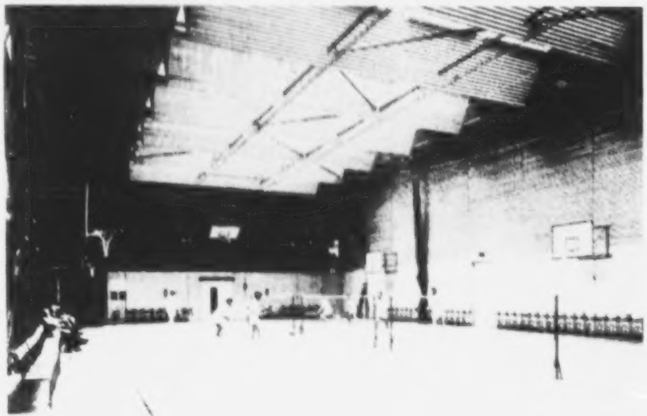
Bingham Comprehensive School, Sports Centre Lounge & Bar



Dukeries Comp. School Theatre

For not much more money a County Council and a District Council, working together, could achieve much more than they could on their own; one met the basic cost whilst the other made the facilities attractive and, once opened, school-use and public-use would be a mutual guarantee of income and contribution to running costs. All this potential for the mutual benefit could arise from initial savings; public recreational facilities where otherwise none might be found and better school facilities. The dichotomy between free education and leisure service charges being under the same roof was brushed aside.

What mattered first was the County Council's preparedness to reject thinking about schools in isolation, to think beyond the needs of school children and towards the use to which schools could be put by the community.



Carlton Forum Sports Hall

Over forty years before Henry Morris had tackled rural problems with the idea of a village college.[2] The medieval parish church, he reasoned, had once served many functions but no longer did so; functions which united people by sharing provisions. As the Director of Education for the County of Cambridgeshire, he was responsible for a host of small dilapidated schools in hamlets and villages from which work-people were leaving in droves. There was no heart to pump around the life blood. Village schools could not support decent libraries, neither could villages on their own support separate libraries. But, said Morris, a large hall can be a Theatre, a Cinema, a place for jumble sales; public meetings, exhibitions, wedding receptions and briefly, in the mornings, could hold a school assembly. Taken together many functions would literally support each other and produce a genuinely strong demand for the provision of a fair-sized hall. Schools of a kind had to be provided no matter how meanly and they could be vastly improved by grafting the other services on to them.

Henry Morris persuaded the Carnegie Foundation to provide areas for adults in his first village colleges; the '*extras*' did not cost his Education Committee a penny. He also persuaded the architect, Walter Gropuis, to design Impington Village College for the lowest fee Gropuis accepted during his entire working life. And when Henry Morris spoke on "Architecture and Humanism"[3] to the Institute of Architects in 1956 the man who was to become Nottinghamshire's County Architect, Henry Swain, was in the audience. Henry Swain thought then that '*perhaps Henry Morris got through to architects more than he did to educationalists*'.

Architecture, it must be said, is a unique intellectual activity, for rather than separating what '*is*' from what '*ought to be* ' architects put the two states on opposite sides of the same wheel so that what '*is*' turns into what '*ought to be*'. When what '*ought to be*' has been built it makes a new reality which people then probably take for granted. Thus, an essential element of architecture is the language of hope; architects hope that people will push beyond their artificial boundaries and they hope that their best work makes this possible.

The moving spirits of architectural thought went way beyond the technological tinkerings of joint-use. The late 1960's, it must be remembered, was above all a time of optimism. The architects in question may actually have read the book "Shape of Community" in which the authors say that architecture should be a contribution to social change and to furthering human values. They write, for example:-

> "*An Urban public mixing place is a mirror and magnifying glass for culture, and perhaps can also be its crucible*"....

> "*But the technological society appears to close its doors to democracy. It may invite participation in the decision making process at many levels, but it fails to provide places where this process of participation may naturally occur*".....

> *"...the church and village halls, not to mention pubs to which all were welcome, seem to be historical precedents of concourse at a certain scale and may perhaps be recreated in function to fill out the modern spectrum of community for which we are searcher...We need learning places".* [4]

With words like these Nottinghamshire County Council's architects had spiritual support from fellow professionals. They also had the practical experience of joint-use buildings already completed. A community education centre would present them with a major challenge to be sure but it was a logical development from what they had already been doing. Indeed their joint-use projects had received encouragement from senior civil servants. A circular and an H.M.I. had helped pave the way for joint-use.

A joint circular, 10/65, had been published by the Ministry of Education and the Department of the Environment. The circular said that the Departments would look favourably upon schemes which set out to open up school premises for public use and, in particular, those which encouraged recreational activity. Those authorities who wished to borrow money for such schemes would get preferential treatment. At the Department of Education and Science Eric Pearson, H.M.I., was tirelessly engaged in stimulating educational authorities to recognise the value to the community of more open schools and the likely benefit to the schools of host communities being more involved in their everyday work. He spoke of schools being *'beached and stranded'* as expensive resources virtually abandoned during evenings, weekends and holidays. Year in and year out there was waste, there were wasted opportunities, particularly in neighbourhoods were the school's resources stood in sharp contrast with the deprivations of cramped homes and low pay.

In the Department of Education, too, the Development Group of the Architects and Building Branch were producing Design Notes [5] in partnership with local authorities. By 1970 the Development Group had been

Hardwick Lane School, Sutton-in-Ashfield.

engaged to design a huge Community Education Centre for Manchester, the Abraham Moss Centre. At the D.E.S. Territorial Architects were working in harness with County Architects in Cumbria and Lancashire on similar schemes. Increasingly new schools were being built with Adult, Youth or Community Wings. As architects quickly publish their plans in their magazine, the 'Architects Journal', the trend towards multi-purpose buildings must have been quickening to that of an all-out race. Sutton Centre became a contestant when it was decided that a new comprehensive school would be built and opened by 1973.

There had been talk of a new school for some four years. Sutton councillors' first official knowledge came in 1966 when it was proposed that a technical-grammar school be built on a green field half-way between Sutton and Huthwaite. A geologist's report however, considered that the field, and hence the school, would be liable to subsidence. Thankfully there were other green fields in the town. Sutton's park land is known as 'The Lawns Pleasure Ground'. It has a bowling green, boating pool and playgrounds at either end. About one-quarter of the Lawns' area is actually a shallow lake. It was not proposed to build directly upon the Lawns but upon playing fields owned by Courtaulds and adjacent to them. Much discussion took place on whether to exchange land or to make an outright purchase.

The Lawns Pleasure Gardens

In 1969 the intended school was now to be an eight-stream entry Comprehensive; Sutton councillors received correspondence stating that they would have the opportunity of nominating three governors.

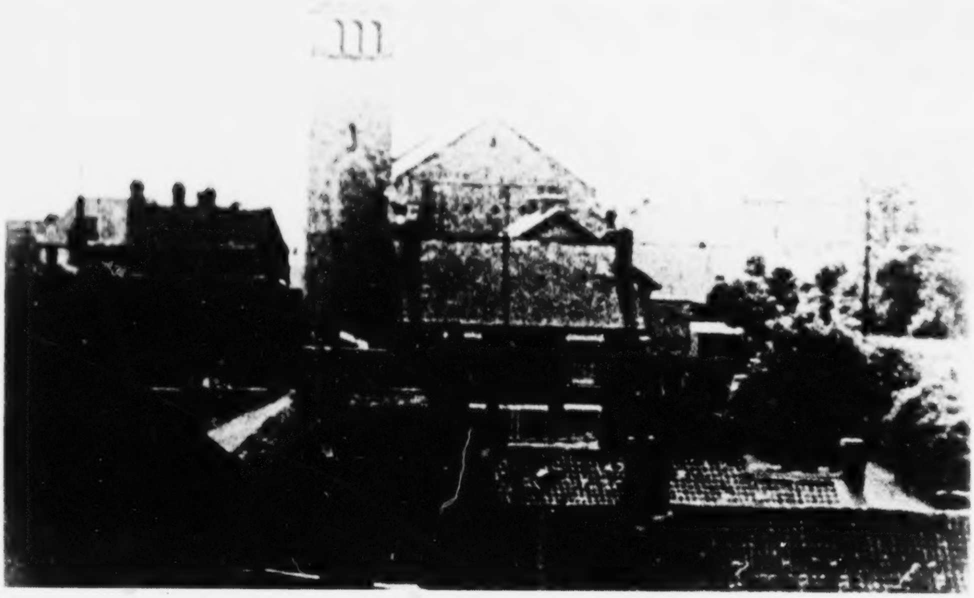
The councillors were very keen to have a new school although many of them wanted a grammar school rather than a comprehensive. Their view was that they had a new comprehensive school already, Quarrydale, midway between Sutton and Stanton Hill. Many of the councillors thought of a comprehensive school as an up-to-date secondary modern school; bigger and better equipped perhaps but not really concerned with academic achievement and the more able pupils. They accepted that the existing town secondary moderns were old Edwardian buildings - great solid things that were difficult to keep warm. But they noted that once there had been a girls' grammar school and thought that the town would only be complete with a fully fledged grammar school. A grammar school would provide the skilled workforce for its newer and non-mining industries. They did not feel cheated by the change to a comprehensive but there was a sense of it not being exactly what was wanted. They had come to expect a technical grammar school as a future landmark of the town's prestige. Indeed, when a delegation had gone to the Department of Education in 1968 they had pressed the case for speeding up grant allocation for a grammar school. The councillors had been unanimous then. The Labour Group had been supported by the Ratepayer Councillors whose party had been formed when the Chamber of Trade went into eclipse after the Idlewells Public Enquiry.

Three Generations on an Idlewell's Seat.

Sutton Urban District Council had many aspects of the Idlewells experience to draw upon. They had spent nearly one million pounds, the leisure centre they wanted had not materialised even though the High Pavement area stood cleared in readiness, they had been involved in a partnership with a firm which invested a further one million pounds in the town. And now the Idlewells was open, the units had been let and business was brisk. Despite fears to the contrary, Suttonians were going to the Idlewells and beginning to enjoy shopping without the hazards of through traffic. Sutton Urban District Council was not poised for a further huge scheme but they had been pleased with the success of the Idlewells.

Local Government Reorganisation was in the air. The thinking behind it was of making new administrative groupings based on size; a million or so population for a County Council or Metropolitan Borough, eighty to a hundred thousand people for a District Council and five to ten thousand souls for a Parish Council. Some responsibilities were going to be removed from districts and *'given'* to boroughs or counties. A district would be a cluster of people wherever convenient administrative boundaries could be drawn. Sutton Urban District Council did not know exactly how it would be reorganised but the fate of being put into a larger unit was inevitable.

When big changes happen coincidences link up like a chain of events, risks resemble golden opportunities and key people just happen to be in the right frame of mind to listen to each other. In County Council offices, moored on the south bank of the River Trent, the Deputy County Council Architect, Alan Miekle, asked the challenging question "*Why not build the school on the vacant plot in the middle of the town?*" If he had wanted to he could have stopped the thought there. Instead he put the question to the County Architect, Henry Swain, who asked the new Deputy Director of Education, James Stone, what he thought of the idea.



Parliament Street before clearance.

Mr. Stone, for his part, had seen the village college idea in action. He had recently joined Nottinghamshire from neighbouring Leicestershire where the Director of Education, influenced by Henry Morris, had shaped a county policy to develop community colleges in 1956. Community colleges had three '*parts*': a school, an adult education wing and a youth wing. Community colleges, like the village colleges, brought those they served together in college associations. A measure of independent financing had been given and tutors had been appointed to promote community use. Community colleges, therefore, had taken on a responsibility for community development. Could not the Sutton-in-Ashfield Centre, as it was tentatively described, be a town college, a prototype for Nottinghamshire and a guiding light for all those other joint-use buildings to which the County was becoming committed?

Henry Swain held to the belief that a community needs a centre which is not just a pretty place but a place of purposive action. Nor could he see why schools should be marooned in a green field on the edges of a town. He knew that this was seen by some as heresy. He would have to face the jibe that forever more the children of Sutton Centre would walk from the town centre out to the Lawns to play games where their school might have so conveniently been. His phrase was that two sacred cows had to be slaughtered: that town centres are for shops and that schools are set in fields. The hygenic separation of the two was offered up for sacrifice because the opposite fired so much enthusiasm. A Centre in the town centre would be easier for everyone to get to; it would symbolise how much more there was to education than schooling. Henry Swain and James Stone forged the Centre's shape in the belief that they could increase the opportunities for happiness in the town.

Significantly both town shopping centres and suburban schools usually had the same look to them at night and on Sundays; they looked dead and flatly forbidding.

Mr. Stone said of the time:

> *"We went about it with all the arrogance of our enthusiasm. Had we had any longer at it I don't know if it would have been any better."*

Two men at least, and their respective departments, were committed, in 1970, to negotiating with National Government, other County Council departments and the Sutton Urban District Council. S.U.D.C. held the key to much more than a few joint use rooms. Up to the summer of 1970 S.U.D.C. had believed that Oddeninos Limited, the developers of their shopping centre, might just build them a leisure centre soon and that the County Council was going to build a comprehensive school out on the Lawns. Could it be that the County Council and the Urban District Council both wanted a social-cultural centre? Could the County Council think beyond 'schools' and the District Council think beyond 'sports centres'? In contrast, outside schools belonging to the authority were signs reading "*trespassers will be prosecuted*". On some green spaces within local authority's housing estates signs read "*No ball games allowed, by order*".

Coronation Street

To begin with all more or less depended upon the school and thus on the County Council agreeing that '*their*' school could be a full-sized comprehensive in the middle of the town. Perhaps only Sutton's own County Councillors could possibly imagine what was going to happen and other councillors just went along with the tide. All the same there was a lot of money to be committed and a precedent being shaped. During a special session at County Hall, Mr. James Stone had twenty minutes and Mr. Alan Miekle had fifteen minutes in which to inspire enthusiasm. The councillors and the officials caught the mood. The County Treasurer said that if the Department of Education and Science would not allow for a full sixth form to be included then he would do his best to find the money!
Then:

> "*On the 15th September 1970 senior officers of the County Council met the Development Committee of the Urban District Council to discuss the possibility of a major town centre development of a recreational, cultural and educational nature at Sutton-in-Ashfield.*
>
> *It was agreed that the County Council should undertake a feasibility study for consideration by the two Authorities.*"[6]

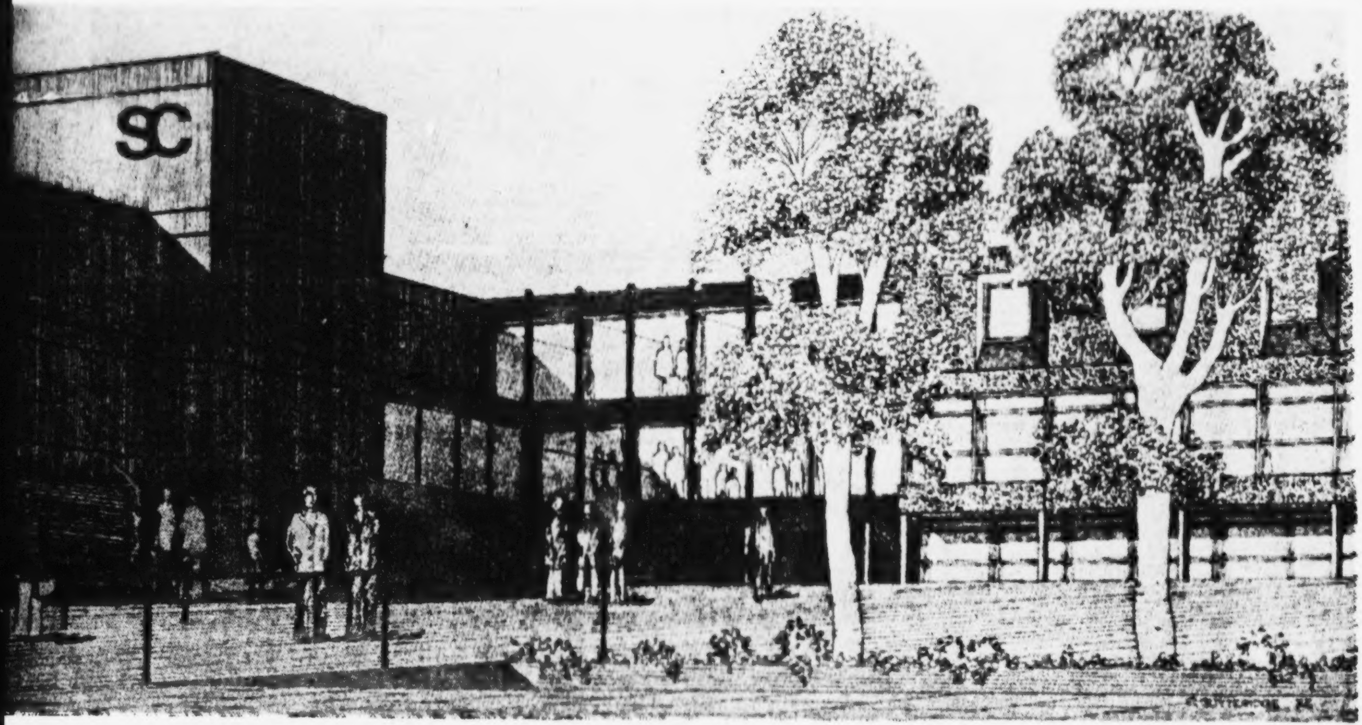
This decision can be seen as the critical point in the formation of all that was unique to Sutton Centre. The enthusiasm of individuals was given the seal of members' approval. Education was to be brought out of isolation into the centre of a town's life and intertwined with all the town's other activities.

For both authorities a joint project would be a prototype and one where base expediency and high ideal would be mixed and matched. Each had their pressing reasons for getting on with things quickly.

But the point of a prototype should not be too lightly felt.

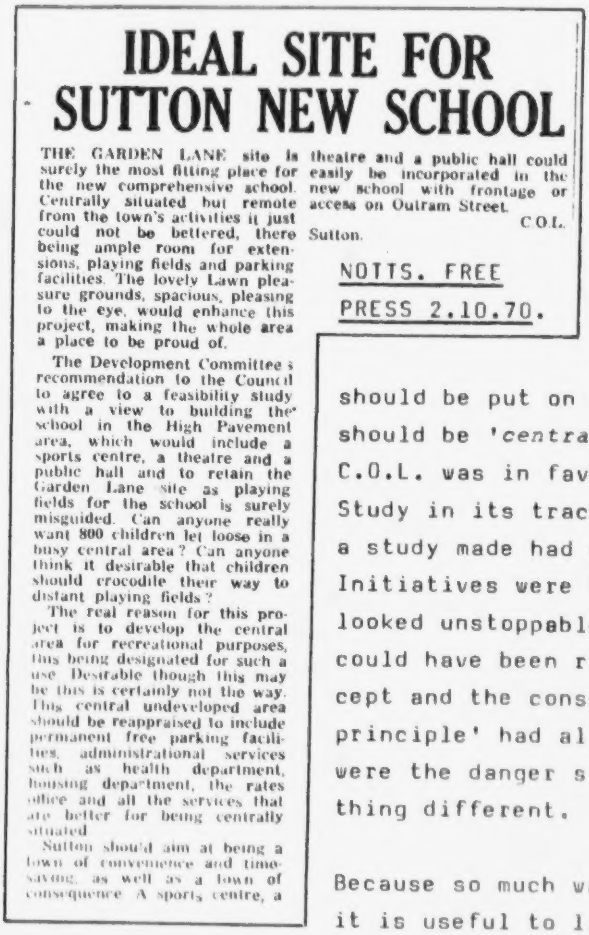
> *"Fragments of prototypes may, through exceptional good luck or judgement, emerge whenever they appear harmless to vested interest; or, under even more exceptional circumstances, when they happen to correspond to established economic interests. Probably, as in the immediate past, right things will, more often than not, be done for the wrong reasons."* 7

An artist's impression of part of the High Pavement School and social complex, showing one of the large internal squares looking towards the sports centre.



CHAPTER FOUR: THE FEASIBILITY STUDY 1970-71.

> *"The idea of a Civic and Leisure Centre on this site was not new. What was new was the introduction into thinking of the proposed comprehensive school"....*[1]



IDEAL SITE FOR SUTTON NEW SCHOOL

THE GARDEN LANE site is surely the most fitting place for the new comprehensive school. Centrally situated but remote from the town's activities it just could not be bettered, there being ample room for extensions, playing fields and parking facilities. The lovely Lawn pleasure grounds, spacious, pleasing to the eye, would enhance this project, making the whole area a place to be proud of.

The Development Committee's recommendation to the Council to agree to a feasibility study with a view to building the school in the High Pavement area, which would include a sports centre, a theatre and a public hall and to retain the Garden Lane site as playing fields for the school is surely misguided. Can anyone really want 800 children let loose in a busy central area? Can anyone think it desirable that children should crocodile their way to distant playing fields?

The real reason for this project is to develop the central area for recreational purposes, this being designated for such a use Desirable though this may be this is certainly not the way. This central undeveloped area should be reappraised to include permanent free parking facilities, administrational services such as health department, housing department, the rates office and all the services that are better for being centrally situated.

Sutton should aim at being a town of convenience and timesaving, as well as a town of consequence. A sports centre, a theatre and a public hall could easily be incorporated in the new school with frontage or access on Outram Street.

C.O.L.

Sutton.

NOTTS. FREE PRESS 2.10.70.

C.O.L. is an influential critic who sends anonymous letters to the Notts. Free Press. He, or she, does not comment upon everything. But when well-to-do Sutton is *'gravely concerned'* C.O.L.'s letters put a certain point of view quite precisely. On the 2nd. October 1970 C.O.L.'s opinion was that the school should be put on the Lawns, the new comprehensive should be *'central...but remote'*. In essence C.O.L. was in favour of stopping the Feasibility Study in its tracks. For the agreement to have a study made had caused really intense activity. Initiatives were being taken with a drive which looked unstoppable. In fact, C.O.L. and company could have been rattled by both the basic concept and the consultations which 'agreement in principle' had allowed to take place. There were the danger signs of an enthusiasm for something different.

Because so much was happening at the same time it is useful to list the areas of activity:-

1. Outline plans of actual building were being drawn.

2. Other County Council departments were being asked if they wanted space.

3. There were consultations with S.U.D.C. officials on what size and kind of town hall, offices and leisure facilities they wanted.

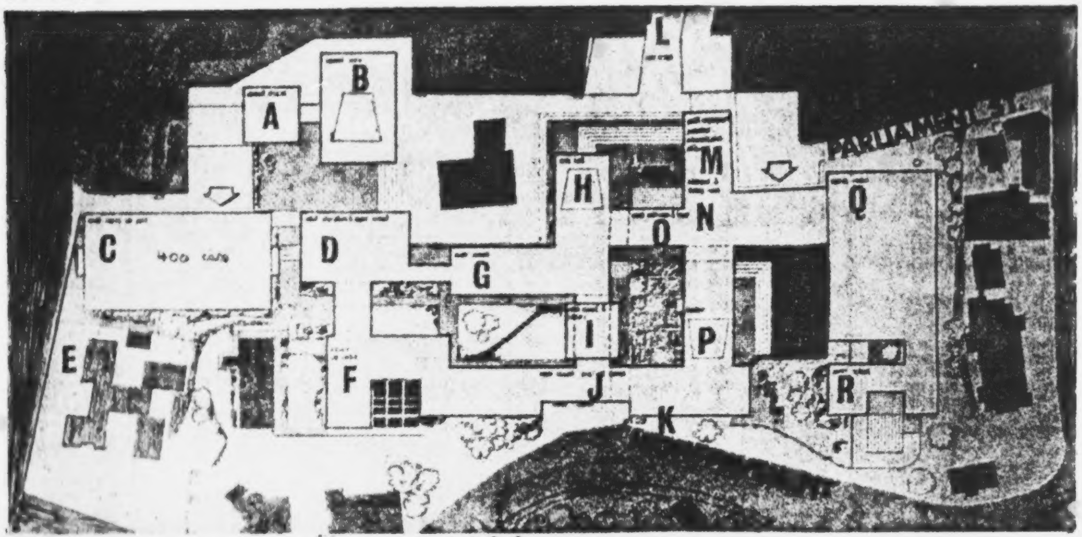
4. There was a '*consultation process*' in which people in Sutton were being asked what they wanted too. Evening meetings were being held to hear demands and get a picture of deeper needs.

5. Visits to other centres were broadening views.

6. A philosophy for the whole was being worked out.

The word philosophy might seem rather grand as if making too bold a claim. Nevertheless, the word quite rightly suggests that those responsible were assembling a mass of favourable arguments, adopting a stand from which there could be no going back and producing aims which were very far-reaching indeed. The coordination of effort came from the Education Department and Architects Department at the County Council. James Stone was to be the author of the Feasibility Study. Within three months he was to have enough material for a fifty-page booklet. Rather than go through the booklet page by page the list of activities will be followed. First, then, what did the building look like on paper? What was the justification for claiming that the centre would be more than a school with a few extras?

The sketch published in Mansfield's Chronicle Advertiser showed the main building to be blocks around two courtyards, almost a modern monastery in fact. The blocks were to be largely long by narrow giving the occupants views of each side. And although there would not be a single curved outside line the main building did have some nooks and crannies. Looking directly down upon the plans showed that by and large the building was not a barracks, indeed it seemed to be open and visible on all sides.



But looking at the plan like this does not show the slope from High Pavement to Low Street. Instead of there being a square, flat grassy field there was a long-by-narrow uneven rise of rubble. Whereas the Idlewell's architects had included a multi-storey block as a *'visual punctuation mark'*, Sutton Centre's architects had a more subtle ambition. They wanted the building to fit in and be accepted right away. The lines of previous streets were retained to become footpaths.

> *"....the large, bulky elements like the sports centre are to be situated in the lowest part of the site so that their mass is less obtrusive. The buildings on the highest part of the site will be only two storeys high."*

The functions within were planned to fit together too:

> *"The layout of the Centre is based on a two-way matrix - quiet, restful and more adult usage at the western end of the site near the old-people's home; noisy, physical and more juvenile usage at the east; on the north the more public and more multi-purpose parts of the Centre; and to the south the less shared and more specialised".*

Indeed, a lot of thought went into what should be next to what and the useful links which could be forged as a result. The plans for the inside of the building made links yet more likely to occur.

WHAT'S WHERE

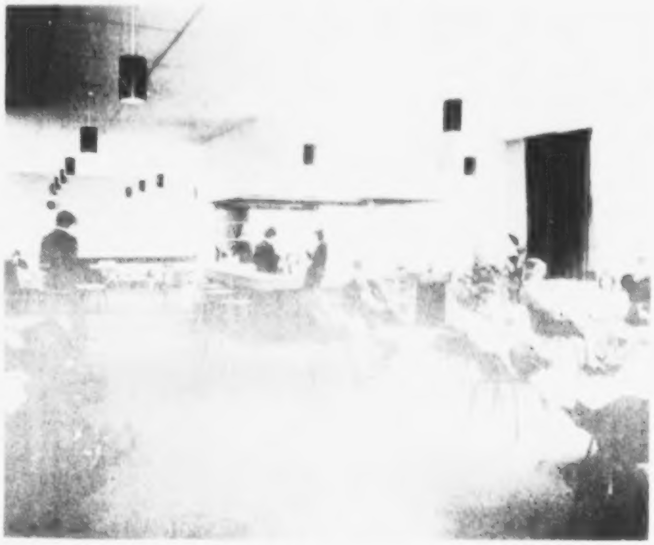
A. Council offices
B. Council suite
C. Car park
D. Adult education and upper school
E. Ashcroft Home
F. Welfare day centre
G. Main school
H. Civic Hall
I. Main school and library
J. Main school and practical rooms
K. Bus stop
L. New shops
M. Youth employment and probation offices
N. Kitchen and dining area
O. Entrance and foyer
P. Theatre
Q. Sports centre
R. Lower school

> *"Looking at the Centre as a whole it will not be possible to identify the various uses in terms of building type, for example, there is no clearly delineated school building. The whole has been designed round the functional requirements of its users, regardless of the purse from which the money will come."*

Page 32.

Three full page photographs were used to give an idea of what the inside would look like. All were taken from a recently completed Upper School Unit at the Dukeries, Ollerton. The photographs told the reader a lot more. Like all schools and many public buildings in Nottinghamshire the Upper School Unit was built in 'Clasp': a low cost public building technique pioneered by the county and with which Searson, Sutton-in-Ashfield's big firm of builders, had been involved for nearly fifteen years. The serial contract for Clasp buildings in North Nottinghamshire was held by Searson with its locally drawn workforce. At the very last minute the Idlewells developers had insisted on their own builders being brought in. At least this plan would mean local authority rates creating work in the town.

Secondly, the finish and fittings of an upper school unit would be made to serve older adults and younger children. In effect, a domestic architecture was proposed just like a home with a common living-room, the same sized chairs and the same cutlery. Generations, as well as functions, would not be clearly delineated; the model for this being what had



been found appropriate to mature adolescents/young adults. Inside the Centre, then, there would be carpets, curtains and fabric on the walls. The Dukeries Upper School Unit photographs suggested that the areas would be open plan too. Inside it would be even more difficult to tell where functions began and ended. Inside areas purposely resembled the courtyards of "*pleasant sheltered precincts*" which would be "*helping to contain the children...*".

There would be a large number of children to contain. Indeed the very urgency of having to open a school in September 1973 was caused by raising the school leaving age to sixteen during 1971-72. 750 comprehensive school places would be needed then. However,

> "*...a further 570 places will be added later to provide an ultimate 11 to 18 comprehensive school of 1,200 plus 120 sixth form*".

This is the first real indication of the building's scale. There was no reduction in size from the usual comprehensive school numbers although there were giant establishments of nearly 2,000 pupils elsewhere in Nottinghamshire. Rather than make the school smaller because it would be in the town centre it was to be full-sized because that would create the most opportunities in the long run, despite the major snag of being built in stages.

The school component would be substantial but staggered. The Education Department added three further components, the youth service, adult education and youth employment. The former would be integrated with sixth form provision and the latter would be allocated space in school areas. National opinion was strongly in favour of including '*youth wings*' in schools. Meanwhile experts on adult education were agreed that there would be a rapid growth in day-time adult education, partly because of an increase in personal leisure and partly because of an increase in shiftwork. Sutton, they felt, was already a shift working community.[2] As for youth employment the "*office would be both central and adjacent to one third of its clients*".

The consultations with other County Council departments produced two major additions; a day centre for the aged and handicapped and offices for the probation service. The success of having two more '*agreements in principle*' strengthened the claim to being different from a school and worked for the architects in much the same way as major supermarkets helped the Idlewell's letting agents. Indeed, why should any County Council function remain outside the plan with older, separate and less central amenities? On the one hand there were home comforts to consider and on the other there was the convenience of the clients. The Chief Probation Officer thought his service would "*profit enormously from the 'warmer' social climate*". As for handicapped people the Director of Social Services thought they would "*benefit enormously from closer contacts with other aspects of community life*".

Not all consultations were as fruitful. The County Medical Officer was all in favour of incorporating the Health Clinic but the general practitioners of Sutton were not. The Health Clinic was a new building on the southern edge of the site and its accommodation, even then, did not meet all demands. The Family Planning Association's unplanned use put a great strain on accommodation and there were no facilities for health education. Despite the offer of access, a film theatre, a lecture theatre and "*comfortably furnished rooms for informal talks*" ...the general practitioners of Sutton were not prepared to support a health centre project.

Nor could every function be expected to be included. Sutton had just acquired a new central library in the Idlewells. There were swimming baths nearby too. As swimming is a big or '*main individual*' activity and '*a spectator opportunity*' the architects thought of another main attraction. Here the need was to create rather than consult. There could be a gymnasium and sports hall to school standards anyway. "*The provision of an ice-rink of modest size*" was suggested. If this one sentence suggestion survived the consultation process, the school would be blessed with an ice-rink and Sutton would have the only ice-rink between Sheffield and Nottingham.

The consultations with S.U.D.C.'s officials were at a delicate but encouraging stage. The Clerk was all for the scheme. His Engineer and Surveyor had advised the Development Commmittee as they negotiated the stages of the Idlewells development. But this scheme was not fraught with commercial entanglements, it had "*for the good of the town*" written all over it. The Clerk was quite likely to retire when the looming local government reorganisation eventually happened. There were similarities with the County Council in many respects: the officials might get what they really wanted if their elected members would let them.

S.U.D.C.'s consultations took the form of what facilities they might improve like the sports hall and what extras they wanted. In the opinion of the architects:

> "*there should be a lounge and bar and an indoor games space for the 5 - 11 age group*".

If local dramatic societies were actually to have a share in the theatre which came with a comprehensive school, the 250 seat tiered space would include:-

> "*...a more sophisticated lighting system, more spacious dressing rooms, facilities for the storage of scenery and properties and a workshop for scenery-making, painting and ancillary services.*"

These calculations, and others like them, were based upon consultations with town's people at large. There was what must have seemed a curious process taking place; very senior County Officials were asking ordinary people what they wanted. They were introducing a new kind of politics into the town; a directness and an instant kind of participation. The officials were thinking of Sutton as a community not a class-bound neighbourhood; council estates versus private estates; Labour Party versus Ratepayers.[3]

Newark Road

Page 36.

Henry Swain wrote later how this '*reconnaissance*' came about:

> "*We decided to ask the town itself what it wanted. I don't believe in social surveys but we had to get a picture of the town and its people and find out what they really needed. The Town Council would decide but they agreed that we should present to them the results of our reconnaissance. The first decision was that this was not a job you handed down to the chaps. The Deputy County Architect, Alan Meikle, and the Deputy Director of Education, as he then was, James Stone, took on the job personally and I, as County Architect, joined in occasionally. The idea was to talk to people directly. What was Sutton like?; what was wrong with it?; what did it need in the centre? Night after night Chief Officers of the County Council could be seen listening to people and hearing the views of individuals and groups. We were not just interested in education or in architecture, but in the quality of life and aspiration. We*[4] *had a hunch that education had the co-ordinating role....*"

Mr. Stone, Mr. Meikle and Mr. Swain spent evenings and weekends in a six-week period driving up to Sutton from Nottingham, meeting up at the Wimpy Bar and then following the threads of Sutton's social life. They became more and more convinced: drama groups wanted workshops as well as access to a theatre; choral societies amassed 1,500 members for their annual rendering of the 'Messiah'. Most voluntary groups had their contacts; probably all of them could claim a councillor as patron. They were also 'plugged into' churches, schools, social clubs and miners' welfares. The voluntary groups were largely women's organisations.

ARTISTS SOCIETY DISPLAY IN A STANTON HILL PUB.

Mr. Swain's notes recorded:-

> "....*doing a tremendously good job but desperately short of premises.*"

Quoting from an interview arranged by the Probation Officer:

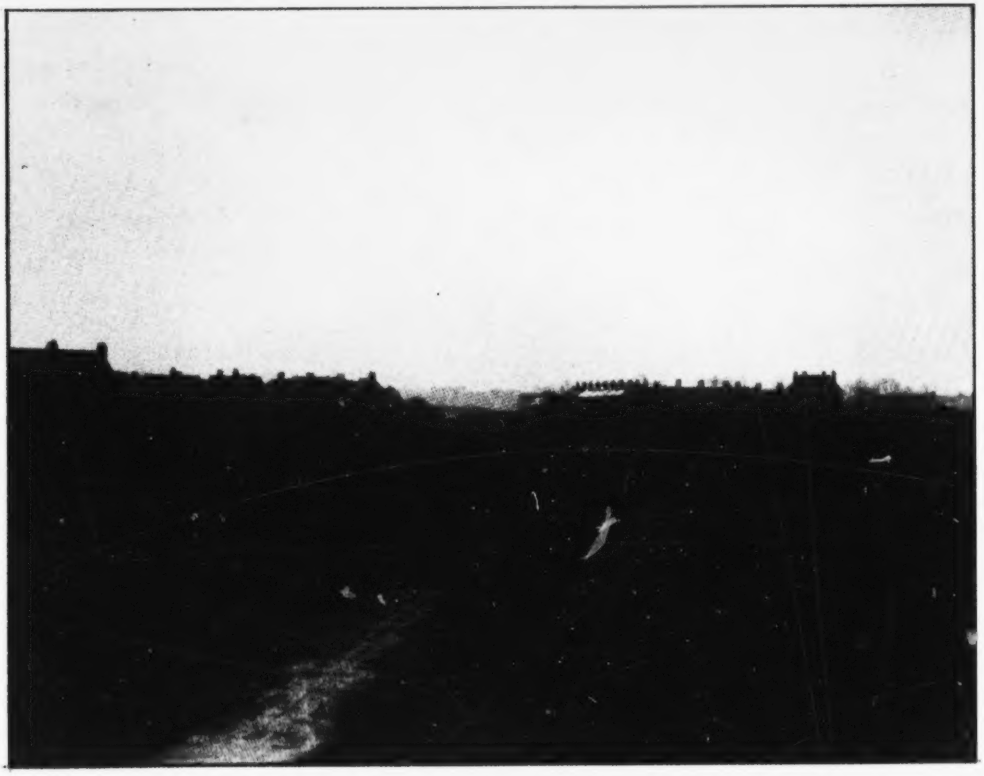
> "*He said somebody ought to get cracking now. There was too much effort going into repairing buildings instead of getting on with the job of caring for people. He said Sutton was missing out in the middle. It was like a wheel whose hub had gone rotten and the spokes were there but were breaking off. At the moment facilities are scattered all over the place. The 'bus service is an escape route, you got on and got out.*"

As well as collecting statements which revealed demands, the officials openly chatted and began to explore needs. The problems of young people rose rapidly to the surface. Unorganised youth repeatedly said "*there's nowt to do in Sutton*". Reaching further and further towards the views of those who were not necessarily part of respectable Sutton,[5] the officers probably broke the unwritten law of "*sympathise but don't support*". But their sympathy was lending increasing support, raising the question of how a centre might serve all ages and conditions of mankind. Mr. Swain's notes continued:-

> "*We talked to church leaders, members of Youth Clubs, the non-joiners provided by the Probation Officer, interviewed in a room over the butcher's shop, Youth Leaders. Here was a group with real problems.....*
>
> *There was nothing to do in Sutton except rev up motorbikes in Portland Square. The young people went far afield - Chesterfield, Mansfield......*
>
> *We asked why they went to Mansfield for their amusement. The Vicar described 'the scene' which runs from the railway bridge to the Brown Cow, picking up the Swan on the way. It was a kind of juvenile Soho. The Swan was the home of the drug addicts. Mostly they wanted discotheques. Cinemas are out. There was a shortage of eating out facilities. There was only the one restaurant in Outram Street but you cannot congregate for long in the Wimpy Bar...*
>
> *What they wanted was somewhere to meet casually; coffee, disco., games room, a hole for the skinheads to hide in, other facilities too but always on a casual basis. The lads we talked to 'in care' seemed to have exactly the same requirements as the 5th and 6th forms in the school with exactly the same problems. What could we do for these age groups? County and church youth clubs at present catered for 10%. Otherwise there was only the Probation Service.*"

It was no accident that a concerned Vicar described '*the scene*'. Vicars and Church life are important in Sutton. The town has an active Council of Churches, Witness walks at Whitsuntide, and a gathering of Vicars and Priests called the 'Ministers' Fraternal'. This body spoke in favour of an 'Ecumenical Centre' within the Centre itself. One minister went even further in his willingness to help realise the vision.

> "*The general idea of the community renewal appealed to him. He said it was a thrilling idea which would help to draw people together. He even went so far as to talk about pulling down his church but we tried to dissuade him.*"



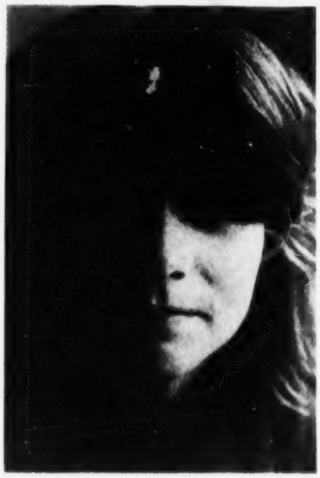
Down the Railway Route from Skegby to the Town Centre

Obviously all this enthusiasm and evidence was having an effect. The opinions and facts gained with so much local colour, the open-mindedness of Sutton Urban District Council's officials and the corporate policy at County Hall all supported the idea of an integrated community centre.[6] But it was not the first such venture nor was it the only one on the stocks at the time.

Flying visits were made to centres elsewhere; to Wyndham Community School at Egremont in Cumbria, a community College in Leicestershire, the Forum at Billingham-on-Tees and Killingworth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Alan Meikle and James Stone literally flew to 'Maison pour Tous', Yerres, Paris. In so doing they learned of the atmosphere of a working centre when open seven days a week. They had the advice of Directors of Education and guided tours from loyal local politicians. Above the doorway at Yerres they read an epigram which was later to be chosen as a quotation for the front page of their study:

"HAPPINESS IS A
NEW IDEA IN
EUROPE".

Saint Just



A SUTTON GIRL

It is truly strange the way memorable phrases can stick in the mind as if capping all other thoughts previously known. At Yerres they had come across an abstract aim and over a butcher's shop in Outram Street one remark had given a picture of the whole. The centre, whatever it might be called, would be a hub for the wheel and open an era for new spokes to be made. Sutton's future could be slowly turned to good fortune. After a hectic three months of all these consultations and more, James Stone and Henry Swain settled to writing a report which had to be finished within another month. Crystalising in their minds was a view of the Centre as a whole, a view which would need a whole new set of arguments to support it.

Three senses were appealed to; sensibilities against which, on the face of it, there could be no real opposition.

> *"The concept of a more fully integrated community provision is now widely accepted not only in many parts of this country but also in Europe. We consider that this thinking is sound. It makes financial sense because it saves wasteful duplication of buildings provided at great public expense. It makes social sense because it does much to bring back into purposeful community activity many groups of people who have, in more recent years, gone their separate ways; because it provides the centre which will attract the unattached; because it enriches as no other social agency can enrich, the whole texture of community living.*
>
> *In the narrower sense of the word 'educational' it makes* ***educational sense*** *because it enables us to draw our schools*

> *out of their traditional seclusion and to bring them into the market place where they will be better placed to provide that preparation for real life which education ought to be and which it has often been in the past."*

Rarely can the word '*integration*' have been so often used in an official report. The word appears to have two meanings to the authors; sharing in the initial provision and sharing day by day after that. Integration of purpose was also needed. The staff would need to grasp the obvious fact that they were there to serve the same people in different ways.

A MEAL IN TOWN

All social and educational services have stereotypes of their worthy and unworthy clients. The financial sense asks that money should be saved whilst the higher social sense asks that the '*souls*' of the people be likewise regarded. To begin with, though, the social sense depended upon identifying needs in the community. These needs made a case for what should be done and later on would provide a test of success. There are quite a few catches in this approach. Asking people what they want may give the impression that they will get it without difficulty. People may have grandiose dreams as they warm to the discussion too.

Further on still, how can people speak of '*needs*' as that which they want but have yet to give shape to; that which isolated individuals want but do not know how much they share with others? Sometimes the authors refer to '*wants*' as being those that people could identify for them. At other times the authors touch upon '*needs*' which, when met, could create activities and groups new to the town. The Report's strength lay in giving '*voice*' to '*wants*' and '*needs*': to speaking with the local people and putting into words more diffuse and scattered feelings. So often in the Feasibility Study there is the phrase "*we see no difficulty*" which must be true because its authors put themselves so squarely behind a vision.[7]

The final section of the study deals with management of the Centre and for the first time the bated breath of compromise was evident. The authors could not force their political masters' hands, even though the path lay towards a miniature version of re-writing English Constitutional Law. For how was community participation to be enshrined in rights and how were two separate County and District Councils to think about the whole building? Both Councils had their reasons for rejecting a '*supremo*'. To begin with a top man over headmaster and recreation manager would command an astronomical salary, be answerable to neither Council and run the risk of being burnt out very quickly. Sutton Urban District Council for its part did not want to have anything to do with running the school. Its officials wanted '*their man*' responsible for '*their part*' and flatly opposed the creation of a supremo. It was not even considered possible to have a supremo on a short-term contract just to get the thing going. The authors of the Report recognised that the very design of the Centre would create problems if some thought was not given to day-to-day control. They began the section with:-

> *"In a complex of buildings so closely inter-locked and with so many areas of overlap management will be of the utmost importance."*

And their proposals fell into three parts:-

> *"....we suggest that, parallel with the Head, and of equal status with him, should be a Manager of the recreational facilities, responsible for provision for the Youth Service, the activities of voluntary organisations, the Sports Centre, town functions and young children. He would also be the liaison officer with the social services elements (the day centre for the aged and handicapped and the Health Clinic) and the Probation and Careers Advisory Services...."*

> *"....we would recommend the creation of two bodies - The Governing Body of the School, with responsibility for the affairs of the school proper and for adult education classes, and a Management Committee responsible for the recreational aspects of the Centre with representation from the various interests involved. The spheres of responsibility of the two would obviously overlap in places and there would be advantage in some cross-representation."*

> *"For the overall 'steering' of the Centre we suggest the creation of a small Body of some six or eight members,*

> *representing the School Governors, the recreational Management Committee, the U.D.C. and the County Council."*

These suggestions rest upon different principles some of which have not been clarified for practical purposes. Recreation is treated as all activity outside school time but it is not clear whether the interest groups would be elected members or representatives of local organisations or both. Secondly a governing body is a legal requirement of a school. This gives the school an entirely separate channel of communication and control. Thirdly, there is the idea of a small supreme body, the Steering Committee, with neither staff nor public included. No such body had existed in the County before. To whom, in their turn, would they be responsible?

To be sure it was not yet crucial to devote effort to a detailed and definite scheme for a supreme council, separate committees and the recreation manager's role. No doubt, too, the authors of the Report smelled success. Something of a coup in local government was within their grasp. In conclusion, then, they put their faith in the townspeople. The idea, in the end, seems to depend upon the part played by a community centre in that community's development:

> *"Certainly administrative and financial miracles will have to be worked and architectural mountains moved, but we believe that the task can be accomplished. We believe, indeed, that it is of such importance to the future of Sutton that it must be accomplished. When it has been accomplished it will only be a beginning, a means to an end, not an end in itself. Whether that end is achieved will depend not upon councils who prepare imaginative plans, not upon architects who build fine buildings, but upon the citizens of Sutton-in-Ashfield themselves."*

Pool in a Market Pub

In retrospect this is a rather strange ending for surely the question is whether or not local government can produce a vital organism; whether or not local government can ever be a party to dynamic organisation. Thus, it is not obvious why the 'end' depends upon the citizens of Sutton-in-Ashfield, not least because they did not consciously or actively seek such a Centre in the first place. To be sure the means may be appropriate to some of their ends, but why should the buoyancy of this particular Centre be taken to heart? Who would strive to prove that the Centre was theirs any more than other public buildings in the town? Nevertheless, history might prove the authors to be right.

In February 1971 a full special meeting of Sutton Urban District Council was called to hear what the County Council officials had to say. Never before had so much top brass descended on Sutton to meet its councillors. The Deputy Chief Executive, the County Planning Officer, the County Treasurer, the Deputy Director of Education and the County Architect turned out in mid-winter to answer questions on the Feasibility Study; it was the second big hurdle at which they could fall.

Sutton Urban District's councillors agreed in principle to the scheme and only put in a few reservations; the outside walls had to match those of the Idlewells Precinct; they would have an indoor bowls hall rather than a skating rink and the theatre should include a fly tower. But those who exerted relentless pressure got their way and a warning note, like a foghorn at dawn, told that the day might not turn out as well as the forecast. Sutton Urban District councillors related to their piece and not to the whole. They were going to get '*their*' Sports Centre out of a School. What else went into it all was the County's business. On paper it looked the same kind of deal which S.U.D.C. had had with the developers of the Idlewells in order to get a library, market hall and banqueting suite.

But the Feasibility Study was more than a plan for separate facilities and common services. It was a co-ownership contract between two authorities based upon changes they wanted to bring about. The liberal intentions were not mere fine phrases. They were goals and aims and to become a test of all that has happened since. The Feasibility Study provides a means for everyone to evaluate Sutton Centre in its own terms. The hopes and aims will be spelled out at the conclusion of this book's first part so that they can be read without the interference of a commentary and thus serve as a touchstone for the dynamics which were to come. As yet the Centre is still on the drawing board, complete neither in outline or in detail, Sutton Urban District Council had asked for changes and Notts. County Council were going to make some changes too.

Thus the dichotomy mentioned earlier and glossed over by the writers of the Feasibility Study was being reinforced by the two authorities concerned, before a brick had been laid or a management structure finalised. Problems were being built in for mere mortals, yet to be appointed, to solve.

CHAPTER FIVE: DOWN TO DETAIL: 1971 - 73.

> *"One of the fundamental reasons for the large number of schemes that Nottinghamshire County Council were able to get off the ground in a comparatively short period of time is that their approach was never legalistic and was aimed at a simple, flexible method of management which recognised to the full the large contribution made by the District Council and the great benefit to the community which the facilities could be."*
>
> *Spenser* [1]

The period 1971-72 began with the production of detailed plans. Rapid progress had been made, a progress so rapid that such compromises and confusions which remained seemed very small matters indeed. But there were real compromises being shrouded by confusion. The period has, then, two levels. On top were the plans which, in the most part, survived intact. Beneath the surface, though, lay some problems bequeathed by enthusiastic idealists.

James Callagham M.P., said, in 1971, that realistic schemes are always blurred at the edges. But not everybody realises that politicians and their administrators are often deliberately vague; both flannel when they sense that momentum could be lost if the parties put their energies into a profound disagreement. Many local people probably thought that every serious wrinkle was being ironed out in advance. Observers further afield, say Scotland or Southampton, probably saw the period as one of fine tuning. Only closely connected realists would be able to see the occasional fudging of issues.

A Private Estate Built in 1971.

The chapter begins with the emergence of final plans and concludes with a focus on the future arrangements. Each part has its darker side; there were casualties at the planning stage, there were clouds of reassurance rather than a clear resolution and there were the doubters and detractors just waiting for events to prove them right.

By and large the local newspapers gave the plans their support.

The Mansfield Chronicle Advertiser serialised the Feasibility Study for four weeks during March 1971. Rarely can a local government booklet have been used for feature articles on such a scale. The serialisation must have been something of a 'God send', too, because it relayed to the public the results of the recent consultation. It removed any suggestion that Sutton Centre was being fixed behind closed doors. Sutton Centre seems to have been accorded the special status of being '*good news*'. Councillors and officials spoke many a ringing phrase, phrases which the newspapers were happy to report. Under the headline of 26th February 1971 of "PUTTING SUTTON ON THE MAP" came the account:

> "*Sutton is to get a million plus re-development of the High Pavement area in a new school cum civic cum social complex. Mr. A.R. Davies, Clerk of the Notts. County Council asked members to consider not if they could afford it, but if they could afford to turn it down.*"

Mr. J.A. Stone, Deputy Education Officer said:

> "*Education is not only for children, and in the High Pavement scheme it will be possible for adults and children to study together, to share the coffee bars, the dining rooms, the study areas and the workshops. We are planning a new world and this scheme will be suitable for this new world. The school will be, as it ought to be, a central and essential part of community living in the town*".

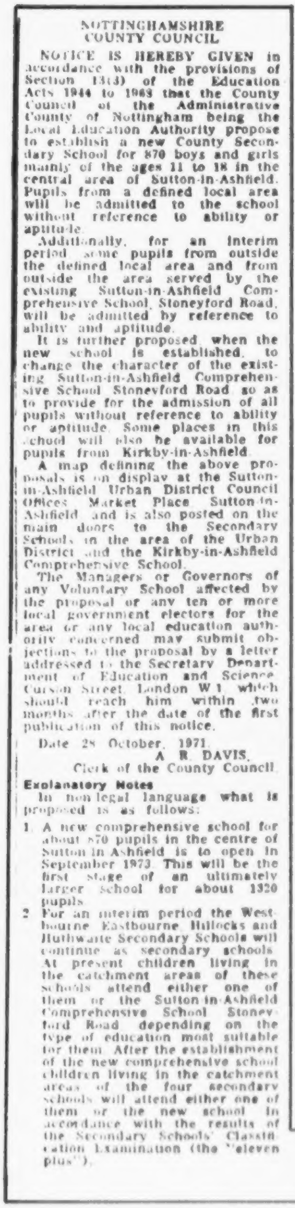
As the scheme moved from one County Council committee to the next the reaction was the same. The idea was recognised as a thing of the future and the global sum was itemised as a matter of fact. The public was treated to the image of a head of steam building up, turning the wheels of local government week by week.

Sutton Centre had already become a piece of ordinary business routine. The business side of the deal was considered much less controversial than the question of where the school should be put. In Dick Kemm's words, that is as far as the prospective Conservative candidate for Ashfield was concerned, Sutton Council was being offered a '*real bargain*'. A Labour District Council would have the basics provided by a Conservative Council and therefore only have to pay for the extras. And to begin with there was going to be a brand new school.

At the end of April the Education Committee gave formal approval for a comprehensive school, in a complex, in the middle of Sutton. In October the shape of the school was spelled out in a public notice. There would be a fixed catchment area but the existing secondary schools would continue for a while. The school would be incomplete, at the same time Sutton's other secondary school would *'go comprehensive'* and for the interim period the older schools would remain as secondary moderns. The edges were blurred, there was still an '11-plus' examination the passing of which would take a child to the new school, the new comprehensive that is. Half of Sutton's children would have to go to the new *'comprehensive'* when it was eventually complete, but when would that be? Did Suttonians read the small print carefully and so realize that there was not going to be a new grammar school after all?

The business side was still necessarily foremost in councillors' minds. As the scheme went through County Committees the business benefit was put under the heading of savings.[2] And there were three kinds of savings which smaller *'outfits'* like youth work and day centre could get. First, and most importantly, no site costs. Secondly, there were common services like heating. Instead of an host of little boilers, for example, there could be a few very large ones. Thirdly, they could use school space; they need not have separate sporting or dining facilities. In all three cases the outlay would be less; either part of a basic service or the right of access to school property. As a result of these two principles the specific areas of all non-school parts would be smaller. At County level the discussions were therefore of a different order from those between County and District. The more productive the County discussions then the smaller the separate areas and greater the shared areas. The more the District was willing to spend, on the other hand, the more the sports side would grow.

Then, in November of 1971, an Interim Report was presented to the District Council; the summer holidays had not slowed down activities in the slightest. It was time to take stock of the whole plan and settle some important details. The bigger the plan then the bigger the details. Huge spaces like a fly-tower for the theatre or an ice-rink in the sports centre hovered above the scheme as if waiting to drop quietly into place. The District Council was to hear of progress so far not least because there were *'ten items on which decisions were urgently required'*. The time had come to vote large sums of money for the scheme.



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN in accordance with the provisions of Section 13(3) of the Education Acts 1944 to 1968 that the County Council of the Administrative County of Nottingham being the Local Education Authority propose to establish a new County Secondary School for 870 boys and girls mainly of the ages 11 to 18 in the central area of Sutton-in-Ashfield. Pupils from a defined local area will be admitted to the school without reference to ability or aptitude.

Additionally, for an interim period some pupils from outside the defined local area and from outside the area served by the existing Sutton-in-Ashfield Comprehensive School, Stoneyford Road, will be admitted by reference to ability and aptitude.

It is further proposed, when the new school is established, to change the character of the existing Sutton-in-Ashfield Comprehensive School Stoneyford Road so as to provide for the admission of all pupils without reference to ability or aptitude. Some places in this school will also be available for pupils from Kirkby-in-Ashfield.

A map defining the above proposals is on display at the Sutton-in-Ashfield Urban District Council Offices Market Place Sutton-in-Ashfield and is also posted on the main doors to the Secondary Schools in the area of the Urban District and the Kirkby-in-Ashfield Comprehensive School.

The Managers or Governors of any Voluntary School affected by the proposal or any ten or more local government electors for the area or any local education authority concerned may submit objections to the proposal by a letter addressed to the Secretary Department of Education and Science Curzon Street, London W 1 which should reach him within two months after the date of the first publication of this notice.

Date 28 October, 1971.

A. R. DAVIS,
Clerk of the County Council.

Explanatory Notes

In non-legal language what is proposed is as follows:

1. A new comprehensive school for about 870 pupils in the centre of Sutton in Ashfield is to open in September 1973. This will be the first stage of an ultimately larger school for about 1320 pupils.
2. For an interim period the Westbourne Eastbourne Hillocks and Huthwaite Secondary Schools will continue as secondary schools. At present children living in the catchment areas of these schools attend either one of them or the Sutton in Ashfield Comprehensive School Stoneyford Road depending on the type of education most suitable for them. After the establishment of the new comprehensive school children living in the catchment areas of the four secondary schools will attend either one of them or the new school in accordance with the results of the Secondary Schools' Classification Examination (the "eleven plus").

NOTTS. FREE PRESS 29.10.71.

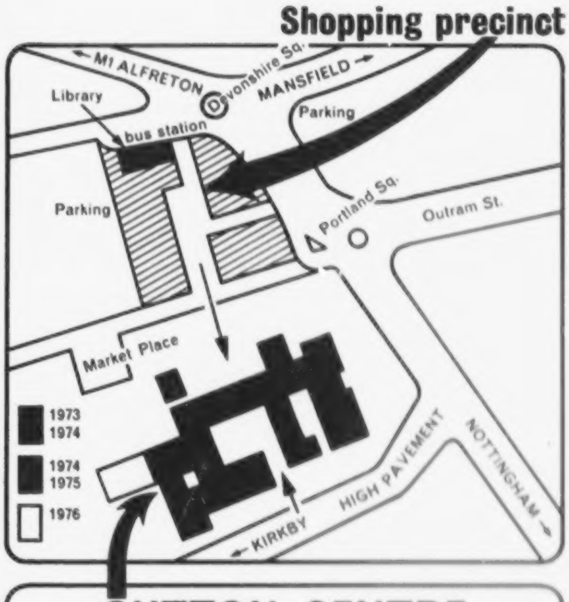
There were the successes; some parts had increased in size and there were to be new members of the Centre's community. The provision for the aged and physically handicapped had been increased *'to make more adequate provision for the aged'*. The Probation Service and the area team of the Social Services Department would be *'based within the Centre'*: the youth employment service would have offices *'at an economic rental'*.

As for the Youth Service, *'the necessary money has been earmarked by the Education Committee'*. Such earmarking and allocation also brought in Adult Education. Almost in passing it is noted that the Adult Education facilities would be *'re-allocated to the second phase of the building'*.

The building would take place in phases. The Department of Education and Science had approved *'some additional monies over and above the amounts thought to be sufficient for the main school and sixth form'*. However, *'the lower school will still have to be programmed at a later stage'*. And so, in November 1971, a programme of phases was unfolded:

> *"the school buildings will be completed in two stages - Phase One (Science, Design, Library, Liberal Studies) in September 1973; Phase Two (Administration and Sixth Form) and Three (Physical Education) in September 1974."*

The District Councillors, picking their way carefully through the document, learned that the specifically *'school'* parts would be finished a year earlier than the Sports Centre which they would share with *'Education'*. For its part *'Education'* would have to deal with the difficulties which would pile up because of phasing: without a lower school. The first year of intake would have to be housed in an area designed for older children. The school would have a year without indoor sports facilities as well as being without surrounding playing fields. An incomplete school would be opened; pupils would find their new school to be partly a building site with all the blocked access, noise and running battle with the site office that the word *'builders'* implies. Phasing, in retrospect, was inevitable and divisive. The County Council was constrained by strict cash limits on capital expenditure. Central Government scrutinised every item of spending intended *'for a school'* as part of their normal investment in the facilities of the nation's educational buildings. Phasing showed, therefore, that to the Department of Education and Science the proposed Centre was a school with many extras. In contrast, Sutton Urban District Council had the impression that the scheme was for a shared leisure centre with a school next door. Both Councils accepted that the first priority was to have some school accommodation for September 1973. They knew that the shortage of secondary places would reach crisis conditions with the raising of the school leaving age.



SUTTON CENTRE
HIGH PAVEMENT, SUTTON-IN-ASHFIELD
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
A project combining community, educational and leisure facilities sited in the centre of Sutton, adjacent to shopping precinct, public library, public baths, market place and health centre.

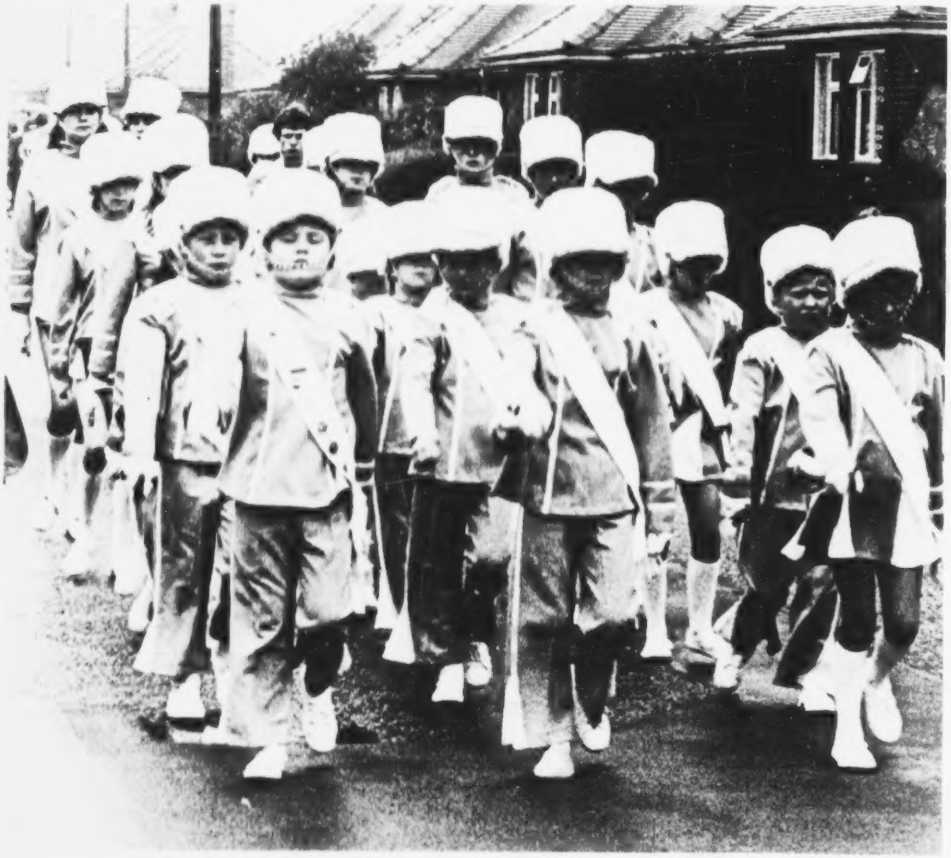
Both funding bodies imagined that their property came first and would be easy to find. The Feasibility Study had said just the opposite with sentences like:

> "*The foyer will be the heart of the centre and will be used by the public and the pupils alike...There are two restaurants providing dining facilities for the school and for use in the evenings*".

The Interim Report before the Council that November itemised the cost of sharing and some disagreements between County and District were almost bound to occur.

The Sports Centre produced quite sharp differences between the District Council and the County Council. For the District Council the only major sporting interest not covered so far was Indoor Bowls as the Swimming Baths would be just down the road. Although it is reported that they would have liked to have had both a Bowls Hall and an Ice Rink, they had decided to have a four-lane Indoor Bowls Hall and asked that the scheme should be so designed that an Ice Rink could be added later. In April 1971 the Ice Rink was estimated to cost £81,000 with a further £10,000 for initial equipment and furniture. The County Council tried desperately hard to encourage the District Council to commit just a little bit more money.

The County Council reminded the District Council that their contribution would be £30,000 towards the building cost and £4,000 towards the equipment costs. The usual joint-use basis had been established elsewhere; to cover for full day-time use 40% of the costs fell to the County Council. That is, 40% of the salary bill and maintenance costs (which in a single year was not likely to be much less than the District Council was being asked to find for once and for all). The County Finance and General Purposes Committee quickly tried to save the scheme and agreed to meet half of any loss on the Ice-Rink arising from public sessions. The District Council, having benefitted from its stand, agreed to these improved terms. There would now be both an Ice-Rink and an Indoor Bowls Hall. The Ice-Rink was wrapped up in a 40/60 formula and underwritten with an additional guarantee. County, spurred on by the enthusiasm of the County Architect, wanted something to act as a magnet for the Sports Centre to attract the youth of both sexes. Swimming pools had proved such steady all year round attractions at other joint-use centres. They were also putting the interests of senior citizens well before those of youth. The connection between school use during term-time and the younger element of the public at other times had yet to be made. Basically the District must have been thinking of an adult and elderly centre, another potential point at which conflict might later emerge.



A Juvenile Jazz Band March on Sunday morning

Improvement in the terms however, was not the District Council's only reason for overcoming their reluctance to provide an Ice Rink. The proposed Civic Centre was one of the year's casualties; moving into the Devonshire Suite (in the Idlewells Precinct) was costing Sutton Urban District Council dear. The mirrors, carpets, bar and other furniture had cost more money than the shell which the developers had provided. Once again Sutton lost a chance of its own town hall. There was, however, more space to juggle with and so an activity area would be enlarged and equipped as a gymnasium; two squash courts would be added and the design would allow for one more to be built later. In effect, an enlarged Sports Centre contribution replaced the intended Civic Centre.

The design details meant that Theatre-goers would be able to use the school dining area for refreshments during intervals. The report notes that,

> "*agreement has been reached for a Theatre seating 250 people*".

It is claimed that this size is,

> "*ninety more than the capacity of recent school theatres*".

And so the District Council agreed to pay the difference. On this item the District Council was prepared to spend more than they had been asked to. The District Council were prepared to pay for a Fly-Tower and an Orchestra Pit which, it is said, had been requested by the local Societies. A Fly-Tower means that backcloths can be whizzed up and down as the scene changes; it will add a rectangular block twenty-four foot wide and twelve foot high on top of the building. Meanwhile, the Orchestra Pit would go in the other direction by being a hole thirty foot long, six foot wide, five foot deep and right in front of the stage. One member of one Society with very tradtional, theatrical ideas was particularly keen on having a Fly-Tower and an Orchestra Pit. His influence persuaded the District Council which agreed to spend £16,000 to make both possible. Few schools, if any, would have these extras.
There were a few casualties at the design stage. The Health Centre would not be part of the overall design, nor would there be a Worship

Centre. The Department of Health and Social Security supported their local general practitioners and flatly refused to approve the necessary money and so space was left on the edge of the site for separate single-purpose building. A Worship Centre was out of the question for despite friendly and sympathetic discussion with Sutton's Ministers' Fraternal it was just not possible for the heavenly body to come up with any money. As with all other good ideas, though, some room for manoeuvre was retained. It was noted that,

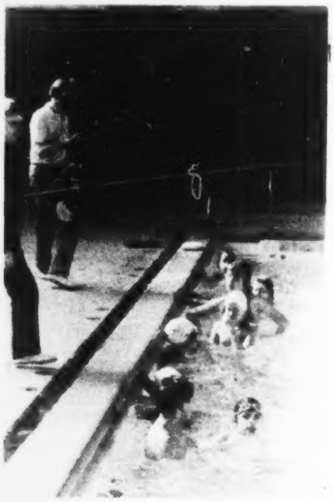
> "*the Churches may wish to make use of certain facilities within the Centre for Pastoral and Counselling purposes*".

The listing of what would be in the Centre was nearly complete; details of the'minor works' tucked in the late arrivals. When the County Council officials had met with the representatives of Sutton's Choral Society they had learned that the Choirs' massed ranks needed an indoor football pitch upon which to perform "*The Messiah*": their annual impressive event. They also practiced in smaller groups. Such needs were to be met in the only way which seemed practical:

> "*In addition to the school provision, four practice rooms were now to be built with Adult Education monies and the design of the Sports Hall will take into account its use for orchestral concerts and concerts by the Choral Society*".

Other minor works included the addition of a Teachers' Centre; two caretakers' houses on High Pavement and the extension of outdoor sports provision on a joint-use basis to the Garden Lane site where the Centre would have originally been built. There were savings all round as well as less expenditure on the last item. The District Council would put up a fence round the hard playing surface and floodlight the latter. Then the District Council would have use of this surface as well as of two adult-size football pitches and a cricket square. The Education Committee would build four new tennis courts and have use of four of the existing tennis courts allowed by the District Council: out of school hours the District Council would have use of all tennis courts.

The District Council knew that the boilers, which heated its Brook Street Baths were deficient and asked if the Centre Boiler could be enlarged. The District Council would pay more towards the boiler, lay pipes to the Baths (for a quarter of a mile) and thereafter buy the heat supplied. The boiler capacity would be huge anyway, would it really make much difference if it were made a little greater? Altogether the boiler capacity needed was approaching that of a small size power station and it would be taken for granted that the boilers would be fired by coal. The Idlewells developers had refused to join in a district heating scheme. But now, just two years later, Sutton Centre would be the focus of the scheme pumping heat to two old people's homes and the swimming baths and burning locally mined coal.



Sutton Baths: Practice Pool - and Pylons.

The boiler house and heating decisions symbolise the progress which was made and the good humour with which business was being conducted. The authors of the Interim Report put it this way:

> *"It is a tribute to the way in which a scheme has caught the imagination of all concerned that so much progress has been made"*.

There was only one remaining property to be acquired on the main site, and an agreement in hand with Currys for a walkway past their shop. Roads were being closed. Nearly eighteen acres of playing fields were being bought from the Urban District Council by the Education Committee and the Education Committee was completing the purchase of a further six and a half acres from Courtaulds. However, it was not quite clear yet how land and property would be ultimately apportioned, that is to say how co-ownership would be legally expressed. Neither was the framework for common services firmly fixed. The financial principle that the running expenses of the Sports Centre would be shared *'between the County Council and Urban District Council on a 40/60 basis'* did set the liability of each side. The need remained to ensure that expenditure met standards of efficiency.

Common sense still prevailed as the principle for common services. For example, a catering supervisor responsible for school meals would provide food for pupils, staff and adults using the Centre and *'snacks between meals and high tea'*. Then an arrangement would be made between the Recreation Management Committee and the Catering Supervisor; the latter would provide snacks to be charged to the Recreation Committee who could then re-sell and retain the profit. However, the Education Committee did not associate themselves with licensed bars. *'This would be entirely a matter for a Recreation Management Committee and the Urban District Council'*. One part at least (that is) would be wholly separate. How, then, was the Catering Manager to supply the Bars Manager? The body of the Interim Report seems to come to an end when such questions might well begin. This was a pity because little progress had been made on anticipating problems which might occur.

Dereliction on Low Street

Appendix A., on Management, put the Centre all back together again, at least on paper. *'Certain cardinal principles'* were said to be the basis of a detailed scheme of management:

1. "The importance of member and user control - an important feature of all Nottinghamshire joint schemes.

2. A school must by law have a body of governors and an headmaster (who would also have the overall responsibility for Adult Education).

3. There should be a Management Committee responsible for the Recreation parts of the Centre. *'Recreational provision would need a Manager'.* The Recreation Management Committee was to be largely a body of councillors (7 Sutton Urban District Council, 4 from the County Council) *'with due regard being had to local interest and three people who are to be from the users (in a way to be determined by the committee)'.*

4. There could be a Joint Council drawn from the Recreation Management Committee and the School Governors *'to look after common interests and advise on common problems'.* This would have two representatives from Sutton Urban District Council, two representatives of the County Council, two representatives of the School Governors and two representatives of the Recreation Management Committee." If the representatives could not agree on who was to be chairman then Sutton Urban District Council was to have an extra vote.

In place of an overall boss there would be two top jobs: A Recreation Manager and a Headmaster. This cardinal principle appears influenced by political compromise as well as religious conviction. Two parallel tracks were being laid, one through the school Headmaster to Governors to the Education Department and the other through Recreation Manager to the Recreation Management Committee to the Clerk and Treasurer of Sutton Urban District Council. One deals with school matters and the other with the voluntary public at large. One deals with the provision of largely statutory and free provision and the other with the paying public.

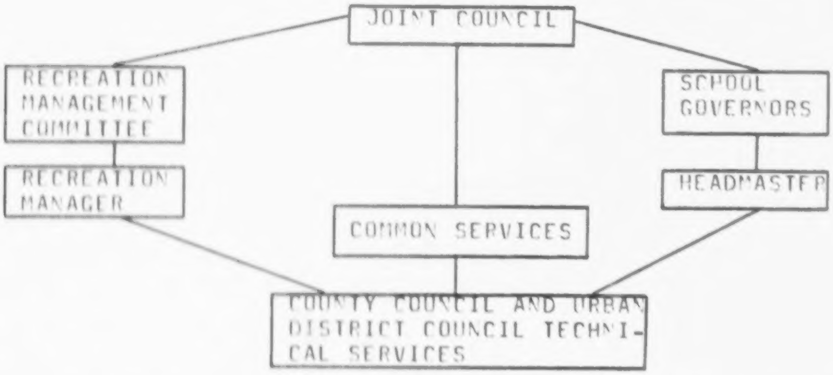
The Joint Council will directly deal with all things which amount to keeping the building going; catering; cleaning and handling of money. In point of fact the Headmaster and Recreation Manager, relatively free of domestic duties, would have more time to get on with the essential elements of their jobs.

As the authors of the report state,

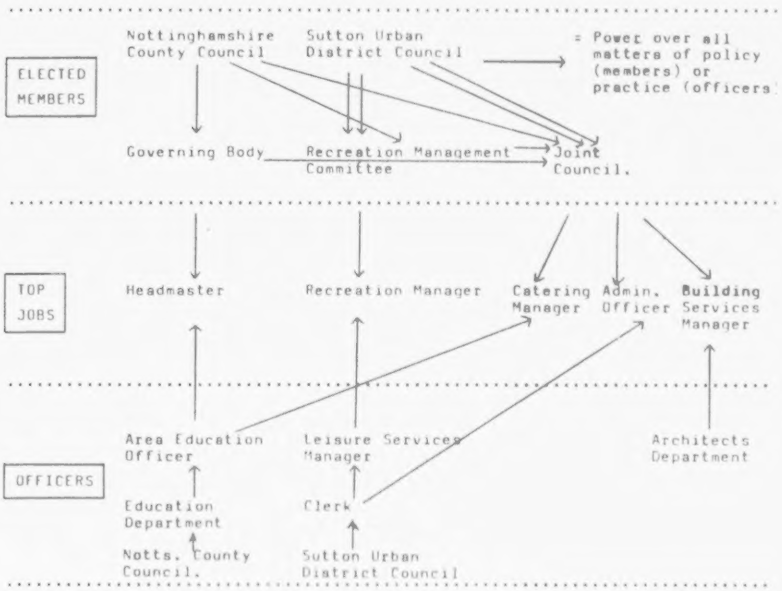
> *"It would be absurd to have different caretakers for each component part and, with the overlap of accommodation, such an arrangement would be impossible to operate".*

Common services *'should be the responsibility of the Joint Council'* with each service much enlarged and each official answerable to a superior who is completely off the site. Responsible to the Area Education Officer would be a Building Superintendent (for cleaning matters) and a Meals Supervisor. The County Architect would deal with the Building Superintendent's repairs and renewals problems. There would be an Administrative Officer running a general office, booking office, publicity and lettings. *'Under him would be appropriate staff, some of whom would usually work for one section and others who would provide a common service to all sectors (e.g. duplicating)'.* This Administrative Officer could, in theory, take a lot of small and large burdens from both Headmaster and Recreation Manager. Somewhere central would be the general office, a typing pool whose heaps of paper referred to all the public lettings which the Building Superintendent prepared for and cleaned up afterwards. Alongside would be the Meals Supervisor laying on snacks and meals. Common services would be the domain of three managers beavering away behind the scenes and working closely with each other, in day-to-day contact with the three off-site officials and answerable to one Joint Council.

A diagram of this structure was drawn but it loses the third component of running the building in the straight line from top to bottom.


JOINT COUNCIL
RECREATION MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
SCHOOL GOVERNORS
RECREATION MANAGER
HEADMASTER
COMMON SERVICES
COUNTY COUNCIL AND URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL TECHNICAL SERVICES

The proposal was actually for a new kind of local government structure but the chart did not quite make this clear. If all the written recommendations are followed to the letter then a diferent chart emerges, a chart which shows that both Headmaster and Recreation Manager will have less power and fewer responsibilites. If the recommendations are taken literally, then the following chart can be drawn:-


ELECTED MEMBERS
Nottinghamshire County Council
Sutton Urban District Council
= Power over all matters of policy (members) or practice (officers)
Governing Body
Recreation Management Committee
Joint Council.
TOP JOBS
Headmaster
Recreation Manager
Catering Manager
Admin. Officer
Building Services Manager
OFFICERS
Area Education Officer
Leisure Services Manager
Architects Department
Education Department
Clerk
Notts. County Council.
Sutton Urban District Council

This chart shows each authority having its own man and its own committee.

What the Feasibility Study chart did, without doubt, was to feed the councillors a simplified version of a unique structure. By a process of simplification, too, there are only two parties involved, school and recreation. Thus,

> *"The other organisations in the Centre with their own accommodation and their own staffs would be responsible for their own areas except in-as-much-as clerical, secretarial, maintenance and cleaning services might be pooled".*

No integration is presumed necessary with the Day Centre for the aged and physically handicapped or for the host of minor functions sheltering under the vast educational umbrella. Whilst the Headmaster had collected Adult Education, so to speak, Careers Office and Youth Service, although part of the Education Department, appear to be inside his school and yet remain outside his domain. In point of fact some County Council functions will be sharing with Recreation in novel ways; Adult Education is to contribute 200 square foot of créche and so is the the District Council. The suggested agreement is that the créche is allocated to the school from 9a.m. to 5p.m. during term time only but would not some adult education be for shift-workers and take place outside school term times? By reassuring both parties that they would get a fair share the guidelines given probably over-simplified the kinds of demands which might arise.

To conclude, in the Interim Report many functions lost their autonomy since the District Council was given to understand that spaces were neatly separated into the times available to either authority. On paper the Recreation Manager, with 40% of his salary from the County Council, looked as if he were totally in the employment of the Sutton U.D.C. The two principles which seem to have been put forward for day-to-day management were:-

1. Run the building as with common services.

2. Separate the differently financed and complicated public services of school and recreation.

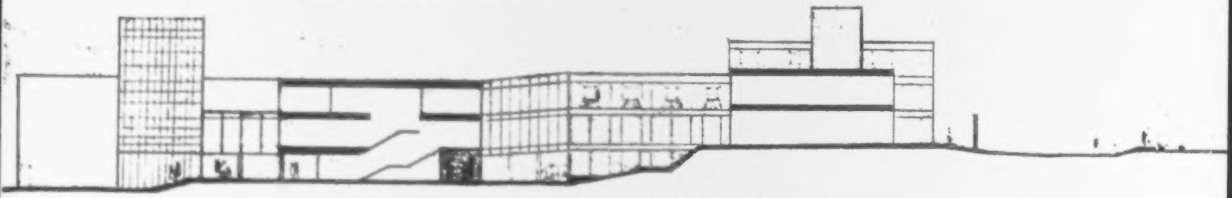
Such problems as might loom large in the future were tackled with skill in the Report's Appendices. The related hopes of integration between providers and the participation of users were repeatedly mentioned as ideals, as aims for the Centre as a whole. There was telling detail to emphasise the points being made. The management chart had gone some way towards summarising the novel proposal of a Joint Council and the common services responsible to it. Awkward issues such as working arrangements for small components or the implication of a Joint Council (and an administrator) for existing procedures were hypothetical as yet. Now all the monies had been marshalled the big problem was to meet the schedule, to get Phase I. of the school up and open by September 1973. The integration of providers and the participation of users depended upon the building being available in the first place.

PHASE 1
Main School Adult Education provision
and Day Centre for Elderly
and Physically Handicapped
County Architect N.T.Swain Directing Architect S.E.Bell
Directing Surveyor H.C.Morris
Contractor J.SEARSON LTD.
Sutton in Ashfield

CHAPTER SIX: A NEW MARK ON THE MAP.

> *"I have been at pains to emphasise the work of Henry Morris because if we do not keep the philosophy of centering our communities on their cultural and leisure activities we are likely to end up with rather pragmatic solutions".*
>
> *H. Swain*[1]

Actual work, clearing the site, began in July 1972 just fifteen months after the Mansfield Chronicle Advertiser had serialised the Feasibility Study in four parts. That so little time was taken was an immense achievement by architects, planners and all the committees concerned.

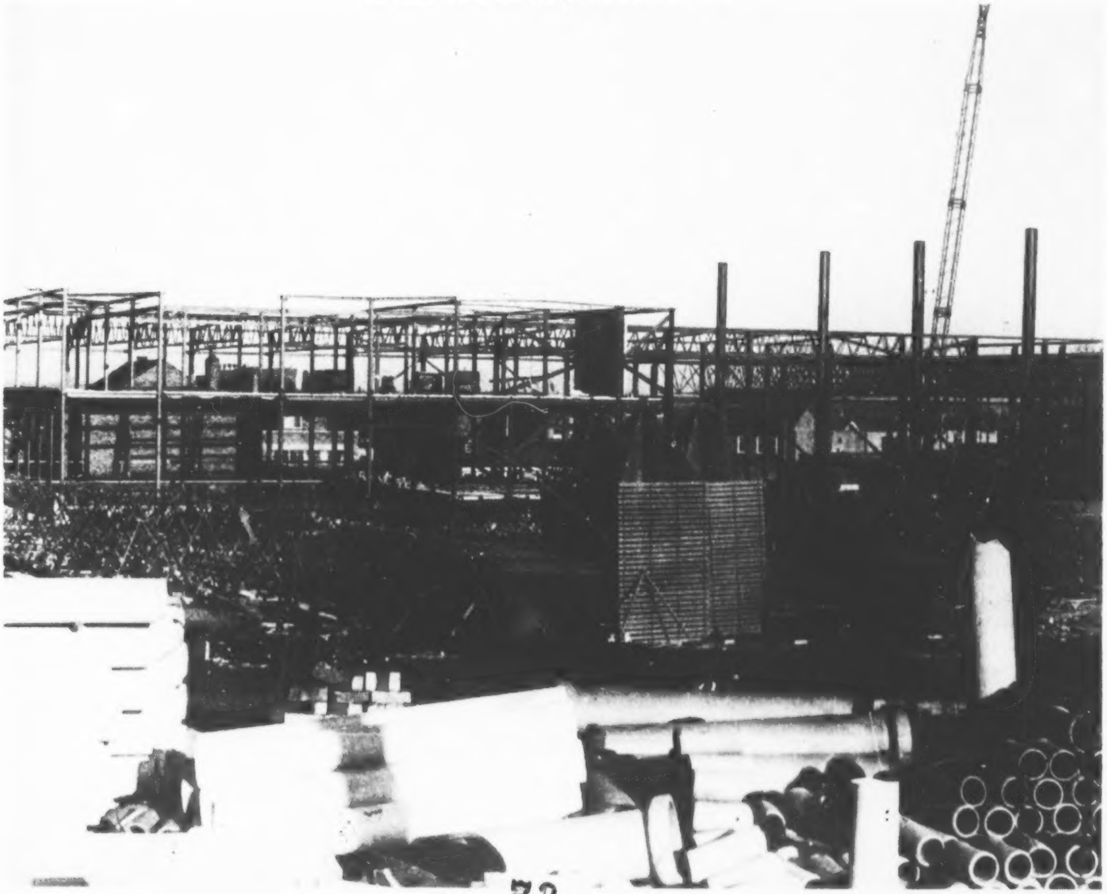


1972: Plans showing elevation, the rise from Low Street to High Pavement

At Sutton Centre the ground floor of upper parts of the building would be at the same height as the first floor of those closer to Low Street. Landscaping meant that there would be excavation costs which was unusual in itself. The builders were Searsons Limited.[2] Sutton Centre was about to make its first major contribution to the local economy.

Searsons moved onto the site just a few months after it had been cleared. Some of Parliament Street's residents had held out to the last which had at least prevented other speculative ideas from taking seed. Sites are not just houses they are also habits, and for twenty years the Idlewells had been an area of rough, but free, parking and handy for a Saturday tour of the market and shops. But now the Idlewells was full of buildings and with a multi-storey car park for which people had to pay. So, very briefly, Parliament Street and where Sutton Centre was to stand became a scrub land of free parking. The old roadways remained as did the pavements and the public rights of way. Those living beyond High Pavement had *'always'* walked down directly into the town centre. Then, with site clearance and excavation, the roadways were closed. But people continued to get across; fences were pushed down as people asserted their *'rights'*. In point of fact, they did actually have rights as

Roof Cones and Steel Superstructure in 1972



no application was made to close the roadways. In a place as densely populated and historically inhabited as Sutton people do feel they have common rights to private land. A picture forms then of sloping ground with a ledge at the bottom. Around the heaped-up site ran a perimeter fence, frequently breached at the places where roads had run and the outline of the first block pencilled out with steel girders.

Some of those opposed to the basic principles maintained their distance from all this activity. The Adult Education H.M.I. complained that the Centre was really *'a school with knobs on'*. He feared that the school would gobble up Adult Education. Adult Education had virtually no distinctive territory at all, its ten per-cent of square footage had been spread like thin slices throughoutthe whole school. The Feasibility Study had spoken of learning partnerships - of adults and children side by side. Those with very traditional views distanced themselves during the building period.

A few *'old hands'* say the Bowls Hall roof was strengthened for a future indoor shooting range on top of it but there is no written record of this. Other *'lifers'* point out details of design which changed whilst the building was actually going up. Interested parties negotiated with the site architect who *'had a word'* with the building foreman and they tried to include *'suggested'* improvements. Toilets by the top bar were an after-thought.

The site on the Lawns was going to be a shared outdoor playing field area with a groundsman's house. The Centre, too, would have Caretakers' houses. The site of these houses moved from the back of the Sports Hall to the other side of High Pavement, thus more land was used and a steep slope up from Parliament Street, where semi-detached cottages still stood, was released for other purposes.

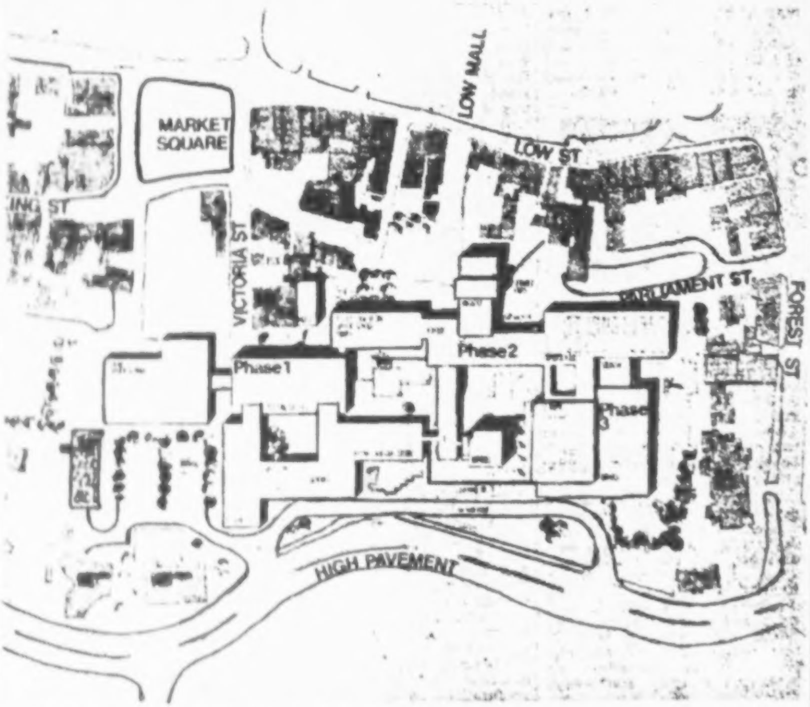
Within weeks of beginning, the Centre was caught in a whirlwind: materials were becoming scarce and prices were going up by the week. After nearly twenty years of ample supply and steady prices the building trade was deeply affected by *'the boom in house prices'*. To be sure of basics such as cement, bricks and plasterboard meant paying to have a load delivered to them direct when available or risking higher prices and erratic supplies. Thefts from sites increased and sites became untidy clutters of whatever would be needed. The spiral of prices panicked many builders into making their sites like fortresses. Being in the town centre it was fortunate that most CLASP components needed a crane to lift them.

On the 28th July 1972 the Notts. Free Press had told its readers what to expect in terms of appearance:-

> *"The ground floor of the three storey buildings would be of brick. The upper floors would be clad with aggregate-faced panels of red granite and projecting windows are used extensively to create modelling and interest in the facades".*

Two weeks later the Notts. Free Press published a plan of how the Centre would begin to take shape;

Bird's eye view of complex plan



A bird's eye view of the plans for Sutton's High Pavement educational, cultural and sports complex. Work on phase one, which includes the comprehensive school, started in April. Phases two and three, on the right of the plan, include the theatre, sports hall, ice rink, bowling rink, youth club, bar and restaurant.

The Centre was described as a complex. The word '*complex*' for ordinary people holds the threat of getting lost in long corridors and for others has the thrill of technological sophistication.[3] If the community was really going to take the Centre to its heart then a means of understanding needed to be shaped.

The building had first been said to be in two phases, now it was stretching, like elastic, into the foreseeable future. The '*school*' had to be opened by September 1973. But the school was some separate and distinct teaching blocks, some accommodation shared with others, and the Sports Centre facilities during term-time days. Phase One would be those areas which were solely and specifically for teaching. What a puzzle for Sutton's town's people; a school but not a Centre, a school but not those parts which would not be a school all the time. Such blurred images were not important though; there was so much goodwill about.

There can be no doubt that at this time the two local newspapers, Sutton's Notts. Free Press and Mansfield's Chronicle Advertiser, supported the first phase as solidly as did its rock foundations. Three weeks before the school was due to open the Chronicle Advertiser had an article which read as if the reporter had visited a supermarket devoted to quality and expensive goods:-

> "*A theatre, a restaurant, bowls hall and sports project were linked to the educational centre; they should be used freely by the students and adults alike*".

Reporters were impressed by the long list of facilities and the free and easy purpose. Sutton Centre, both as a design and a determination, was easy to understand. The press gave it a cheerful '*come and get it you lucky people*' advance publicity.

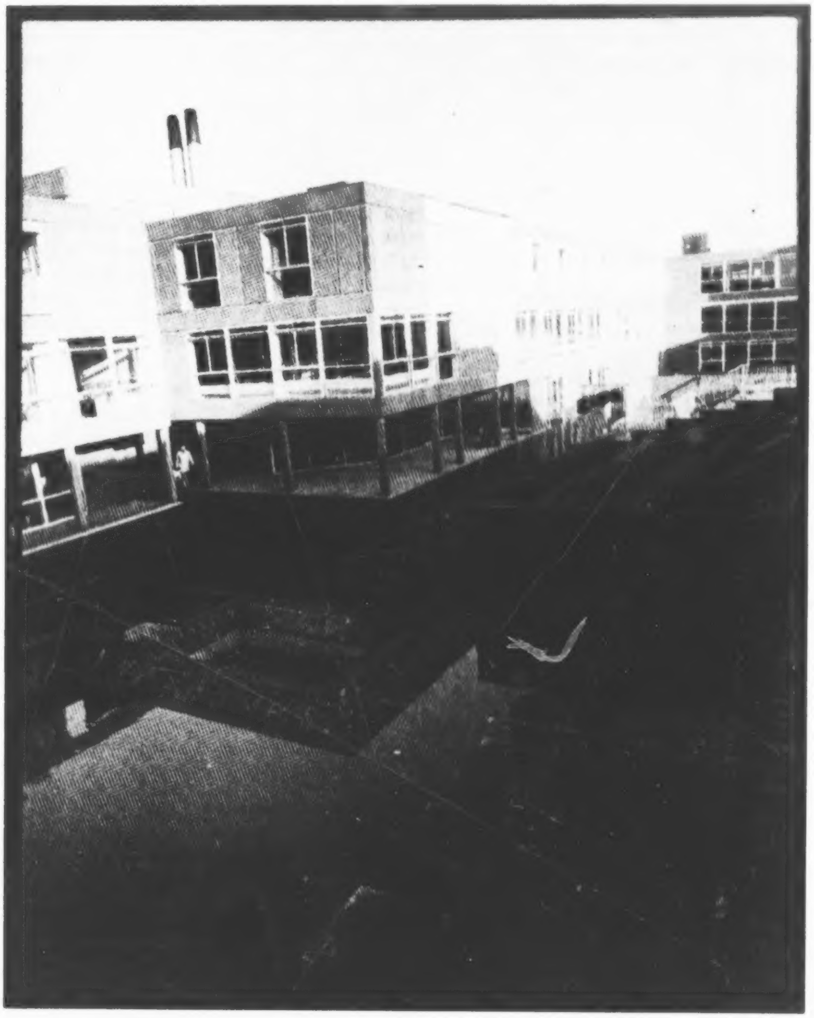
The article continued:-

> "*Sutton residents had nothing but praise for the planners when a CHAD reporter and photographer conducted a survey of use amongst shoppers in the Idlewells Centre*".

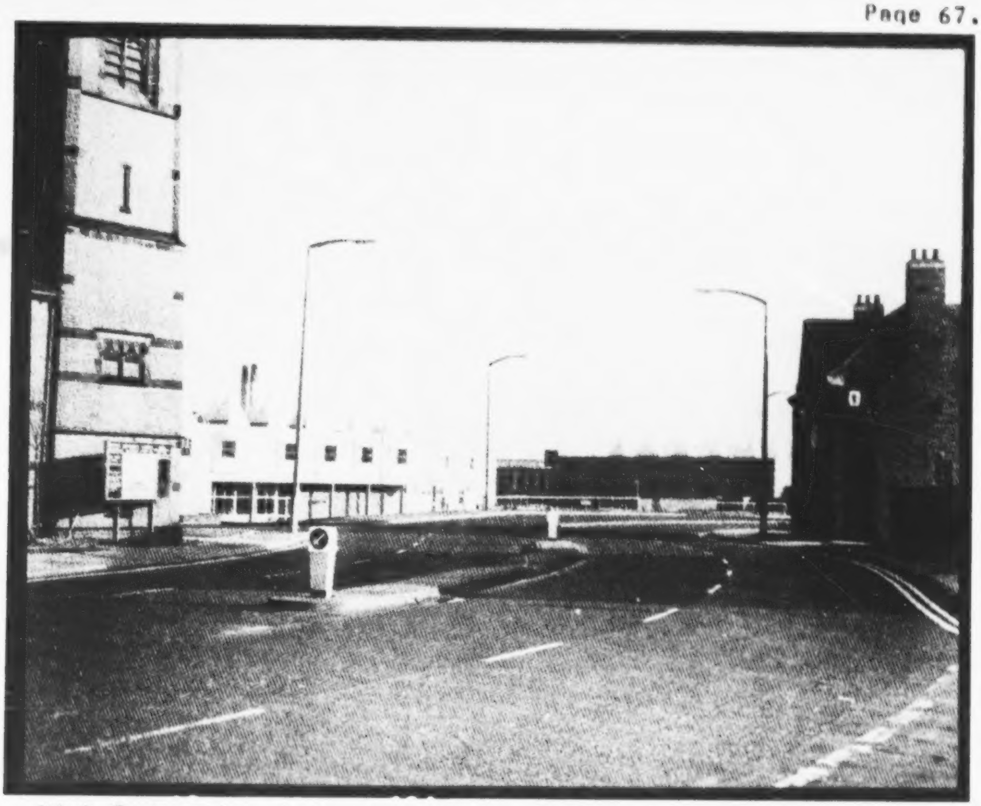
Mr. Dean, of Kirkby Folly Road, Sutton, linked the Centre with still greater ambitions:-

> *"Full marks to a Council that thinks of residents. They have done much to provide us, not only with jobs, but homes and tremendous facilities for every section of the community. What a pity there is little they can do to provide us with a better football team."*

On the face of it Mr. Dean was at one with the aims of the Feasibility Study. For the time being the Feasibility Study would be the guiding light. The Study held aims and objectives, so many, in fact, that a list of them reads like the register of a brave new world.

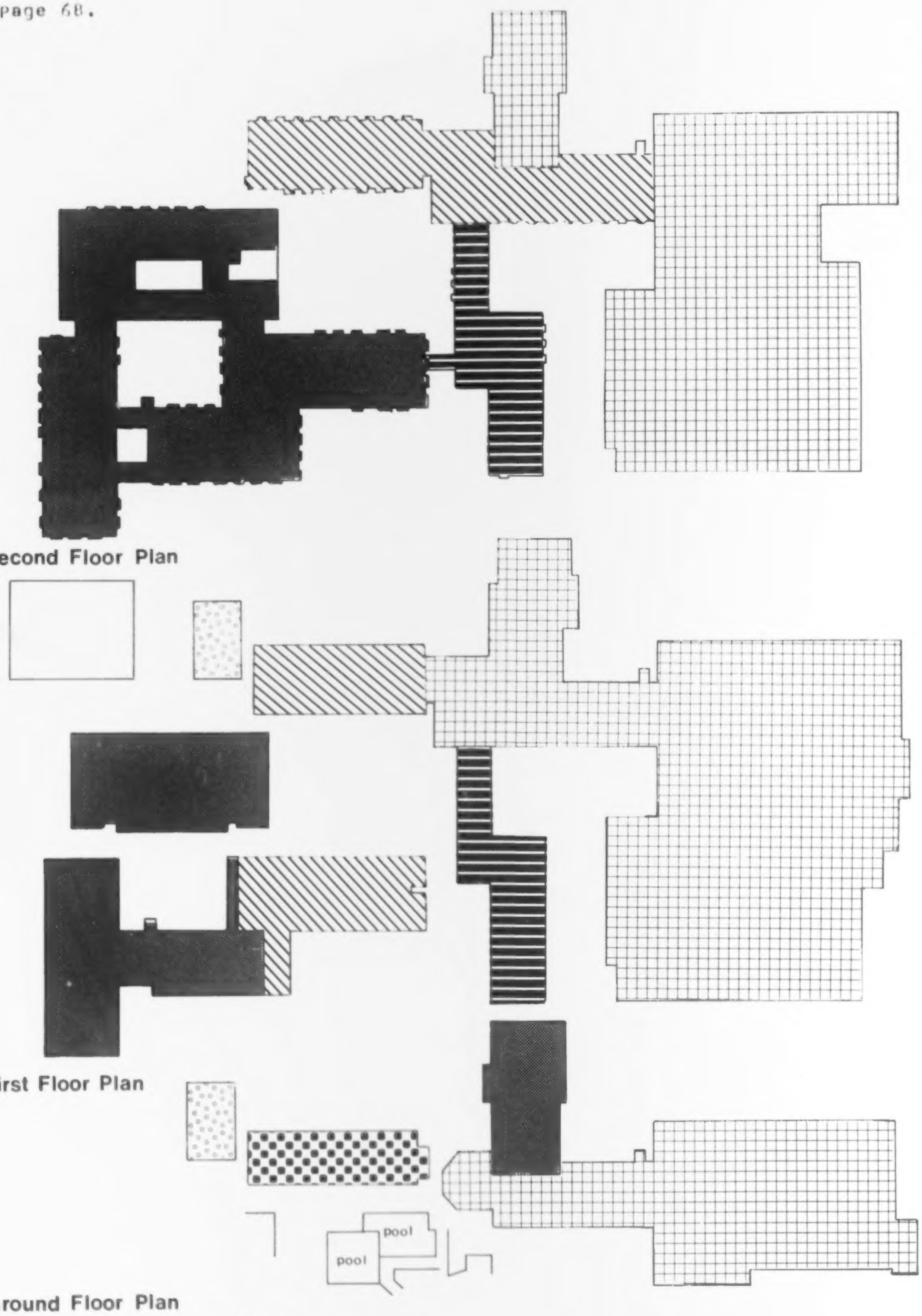


The Pool and Waterfall - before the pump was fitted.



High Pavement: A Church; A Pub; Sutton Centre with roof cones in the middle

Pottery Corner: Day Centre Bottom Left, School Bottom Right



Second Floor Plan

First Floor Plan

Ground Floor Plan

"UP GOES THE BUILDING"

KEY TO THE BUILDING AS EACH PART WAS OPEN FOR USE.

■	1973	Downstairs - Library, Personal Relationships, Technical Studies/Craft Area. Upstairs - European Studies, Literature and Drama, Home Management, Mathematics, Science (with environmental studies). Boiler House and service areas.
▧	1974	Day Centre opened. Block 2B completed. Main Dining Hall.
▩	1975	Bunker opened. Careers Office opened.
░	1976	Block 3C completed Sports Facilities and Ploughman's Area used by the School but not Public - due to Fire Regulations being enforced. Music Block opened.
▦	1977	Sports Hall, Bowls Hall, Ice Rink and Theatre opened to the Public. Crèche and Medical Centre fully opened. Main entrance and reception area opened in September
▤	1978	Block 3B opened including, Social Services, Probation Office, Administrative Offices for Leisure Staff, Staff Room and Quiet Room.
⬚	1980	Building began on Lower School Block.

CHAPTER SEVEN: "1973 AND THE SCHOOL OPENS".

> *"Utopias can exist as realities only if they die shortly after being born, to be reborn with new shapes...."*
>
> *Dubos* [1]

The head and senior staff had a few months before the pupils started in which to give shape to the community school. Bob Mahy, the first deputy head wrote later:-

> *"In starting from scratch at the Centre we tried to examine every aspect of normal school organisation and to plan carefully in the light of our collective experience and beliefs about education.* [2]

A clear contrast was drawn with the "old order" of traditional secondary schools. From the very beginning the headmaster, Stewart Wilson, led the staff on a crusade. Press reporters visiting during the first few weeks noticed the difference. The local press was enthusiastic over the "new order" which they saw being established so quickly.

Stewart Wilson had worked for the authority once before as head of Geography at Rushcliffe Technical Grammar School for Boys. He took up his first headship on Teeside in 1966 having held senior posts in secondary modern, grammar and comprehensive schools. Throughout the 1960's he had been an ardent advocate of comprehensive schools. At Stapylton School he had experienced what he called the logical development of comprehensive education into community education. For example, parents were welcome in the classrooms at all times. On one occasion two parents noticed that the Silk Screen frame, which had to be held exactly in the same place, needed to be repositioned each time. They designed and made a balance lever. Later, when exploring the school, they discovered a void beneath the stage and thought it could be converted into a useable room. They recruited friends as helpers and turned the space into a studio.

Stapylton School was not in a prosperous or particularly confident neighbourhood. Stewart Wilson saw it as being fairly typical of industrial North-East England: He wrote;

> *"For some it is a better life. When the money is coming in (especially when both husband and wife are working) the home is like a little palace with fitted carpets, new furniture, a colour telly and the car parked outside. For many it is a constant battle to make ends meet; especially the increasing number*

who are unemployed and those on social security or supplementary benfits. it is a struggle to supervise or satisfy their children; or quite simply to get any serenity or contentment out of life ....."

His commitment and experience had led to a critical, comprehensive appreciation of both school and community. In November 1972 Stewart Wilson had given a talk at a teachers' conference in Hartlepool and urged them to look beyond comprehensivisation to community education. He listed barriers; those around buildings; teachers' roles; the curriculum; young people in schools; between head and staff and between school departments. His Hartlepool's speech pounded away from the position that "*the sooner we take them (these barriers) down the better.*"[3]

> *"....It is no use our creating a warm and secure environment for our pupils from nine o'clock to four o'clock and then shutting our minds to the fact that the prospect for the other seventeen hours is bleak and forbidding. If we have the least grain of social conscience we must be involved in the community outside the school. But on a far more simple professional plane, if the education we are providing in our schools is to have any real meaning or relevance for our boys and girls it must surely be based, initially, on the community they know and the environment where they live. These two statements of faith really bring me to the hub of my theme, that the school and community are inseparable."*[4]

Stewart Wilson was notable even then for his courage and his convictions. He was not going to embark on demolition alone. He expected to lead an entire staff against barriers which he regarded as demoralising, divisive and destructive. There was just this note of anticipation in his Hartlepool's speech as he had been appointed head at Sutton Centre from January 1st. 1973.

Headmasters vary to be sure, but they do not necessarily vary a great deal. By and large they are chosen to keep things going; because they are good administrators, or because they are keen on discipline and academic standards or because they have shown a flair for school buildings and amenities. Ambitious teachers usually develop those skills which are away from the classroom, the management skills of report writing, memoranda, record keeping and delegation. But Stewart Wilson was not offering these skills primarily and nor were they being especially looked for. There were few opportunities like Sutton Centre and perhaps just as few headmasters like Stewart Wilson. A different kind of headmaster was being looked for. He must have struck a chord when he asked:

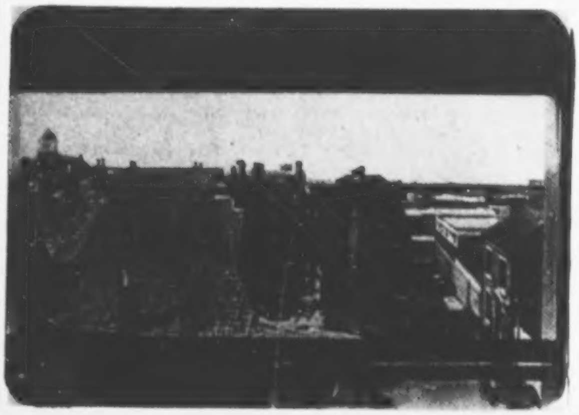
> "*Isn't the community our classroom? Couldn't much of our drama and singing and painting and photography, for example, happen in the market place?*" 5

By January one Deputy Head had been recruited; by May 1st. the staff would be increased by a second Deputy and five Course Directors. Stewart Wilson was continously corresponding on matters of principle and practice. He sent extensive questionnaires at regular intervals and expected rapid replies. It became increasingly difficult to discuss philosophy by post. And so, during one weekend in March 1973, decisions were "*thrashed out*" at Stewart Wilson's previous school's field centre in Yorkshire. The result was a staff policy document which contained new ideas and new terms with which to describe them. Reasons were given for each choice so that details and implications could be worked out later. The prospect was that two full years of pupils would begin in September to be taught by twenty-four staff. The policy document set out the combination of progressive education and community education which they would develop together.

The staffing structure was to be an organisation for action. There were to be no non-teaching posts or fancy titles like "heads of pastoral" which were typical of the era. The three deputies would teach 50% of the time and the "Course Directors" would have a full teaching load. There would be an equality between departments (or'courses') by virtue of each director holding a scale four post. Experience outside the classroom, voluntary participation and leadership of some kind, was looked for. Without being too precise, the core of senior staff were looking for something *"extra"* in the job applicants. The advertisements said as much too. County Officials had been convinced that a special wording was needed to attract the right applicants. County Hall prepared a leaflet which conveyed the policy on a page. It said that there would be neither *"the time wasting features of the traditional school timetable"* nor *"any repressive system of rules and punishments"*.

Thus, even in a brief one-page outline the *"old order"* was provoked. By 1973 there had been all manner of change in primary school teaching. Group work and individual learning, for example, had become almost as entrenched as the orthodoxies which they had replaced. But secondary education, although reorganised, had not changed a great deal in comparison. The weekend meeting in March gave shape and substance to a new order. In part there was an aversion to existing practices but in larger part there was the attraction of a school having a moral order; relationships rather than retributions.

All pupils were to be mixed by sex, ability, friendship group and according to feeder primary schools. The whole group would have the same tutor and the same curriculum throughout their five years together. By staff dispensing with non-teaching time the group size would be reduced to twenty-four pupils. The group size would make a block timetable of five morning and five afternoon sessions possible. The two block sessions would be the same length because the first half-an-hour of each day would be spent with the tutor, who would also be the group's teacher in his or her subject. Breaks in the block of time would be taken by mutual agreement in the coffee bar which served the whole department. Here they would meet tutor groups of different years, by virtue of open plan, if they had not already done so. School would finish at 3.45p.m. and the working day at 4.45p.m. School would then reopen again and tutors would teach at least one evening (6.30 - 8.30p.m.) or weekend session. For the pupils these *"eleventh sessions"* would be voluntary, for tutors they would be compulsory by being part of a verbal agreement at interview.



With the recreation provision still in the process of construction and the Recreation Manager not yet appointed, only the educational provision can be explained in detail at present.

THE EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

(a) To provide high quality teaching

(b) To ensure a high degree of caring

(c) To encourage a high degree of community involvement in the educative process.

HIGH QUALITY TEACHING—will be achieved by:

Organising the school so that the maximum size of teaching group is twenty-four pupils.

Utilising to the full the opportunities which the open-plan design of the building provide for team-teaching and individualised learning with every pupil working at his or her own proper pace.

Employing a system of block time-tabling which encourages study in depth and eliminates the time wasting features of the traditional school timetable.

Designing a curriculum which provides a balanced education for all boys and girls.

HIGH DEGREE OF CARING—will be achieved by:

Emphasising the importance of the tutor group as the basic pastoral unit in the Centre with pupils remaining together as a unit with their tutor throughout their school life.

Giving priority to parental involvement and ensuring that every parent is contacted personally by their son's or daughter's tutor.

Developing our pupil profile as a positive document which gives a comprehensive account of a pupil's activities inside and outside the Centre, which emphasises his good personal qualities and which gives a detailed assessment of his attainment in all areas of the curriculum.

Creating an atmosphere in the Centre which is based on "consideration for others" and which encourages high standards of behaviour without the need for any repressive system of rules and punishments.

HIGH DEGREE OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

This will be achieved by encouraging adults to come into the Centre to look at what is taking place in education and when they so wish to take part. Where members of the public have something to offer the Centre such as a skill or some specialist knowledge or just the willingness to help, they will be encouraged to share this with the Centre.

Market Place from the Centre

JOINT USE FACILITIES COMBINING COUNTY AND LOCAL COUNCIL INTERESTS WITHIN THE SAME COMPLEX ;

COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION for 1200 PUPILS plus 6th FORM

JOINT USE PLAYING FIELDS (Adjoining the Town's Public Park)

ADULT EDUCATION

YOUTH CENTRE

CAREERS OFFICE

THEATRE

ICE RINK, BOWLS HALL, SQUASH COURTS

SPORTS HALL/CONCERT HALL

DAY CENTRE for AGED and HANDICAPPED

CRECHE

RESTAURANT/BARS

ADMINISTRATION OFFICES (Including Social Services)

Voluntary too, would be first name terms between staff and pupils.

The Course Directors were responsible for twelve areas of study and activity: Basic Skills. Communications and Resources. Creative Arts (fine Arts and Music). Environmental Studies. European Studies. Home Management. Literature and Drama. Mathematics. Personal Relationships and Community Service. Science. Sports and Leisure. Technical Studies. The Directors and Tutors were to design courses which would integrate subjects as much as possible; refer to the locality for materials and problems; encourage independent learning and be appropriate to adults (be they parents or not) who could attend any session, day or evening, without prior notice. Courses were also to encourage pupils to work out in the community either collecting information, helping others or using local venues. The pupils would work for C.S.E. Mode III until the end of their fifth year and could begin 'A' level work as soon as they were ready.

Tutors would be responsible for the pastoral care of their group and make home visits at least twice a year to meet with all parents. Each tutor group would have one representative on the "*School Council*" which would discuss and agree the code of conduct in consultation with the Head. School Council was actually also an unusual use of the word "*school*". As Stewart Wilson recalls:

> "*One of our first tasks at Sutton Centre - before it opened in fact - was to establish the name Sutton Centre and remove any vestige of the word 'school' from the title.*" 6

This brief summary sets the scene and shows that from the beginning there were responsibilities which went with the "*bill of rights*" drawn up for the staff, parents, adults and pupils. All vestiges of the grammar school order had been removed. There were no uniforms, no 'O' levels, no houses, no prefects, no assembly, no corporal punishment and no staff room. As the leaflet said the "*bill of rights*" focused upon the tutor in the first instance. Each tutor was, in effect, to lead a mini-school; with morning sessions, teaching their specialism, making home visits, being the first point of reference in addition to running a mixed aged voluntary club one night a week. If every tutor were to do these tasks conscientiously no pupil, and possibly no parent, would be beyond contact with someone who knew them well.

The new order provided for a community within the school and innovation in every respect of the content and style of its teaching. Parents were to be co-partners rather than helpers. The school would analyse local conditions; there would be school work on the streets; the very streets which traditionally had been kept clear of children. In truth the purposes of the two orders are in conflict. Teachers at other local schools who were loyal to the old order did not mind a little healthy competition over academic attainment. That was to be expected. The problem was that the competition depended upon having the same audiences and roughly equal resources. But whereas the older order took its cue from what employers said they needed, the new order looked to be putting the present experience of children and their parents first. Instead of looking at the old orders' successes Sutton Centre's founding teachers seemed to be harping on its casualities and thereby its failure. And they had all the advantages of a new building and its equipment too.

For even though the surrounds were still a building site and there were many special areas not yet built, there were acres of room for the first intake. In September 1973 there was the first intake of 270 pupils from the six "feeder primaries" in the fixed catchment area of the southern half of the town.[7] There were anomalies too. One batch of entrants were from a neighbouring village who had "*passed*" their eleven plus. Another batch were the older children of staff members; a further group was volunteered by nearby secondary schools as children who had problems but who might "*fit in*" at Sutton Centre. Some heads of schools with eight period days and signs by the gates reading "*Trespassers will be prosecuted*" saw Sutton Centre as openly keen to take on the "*challenge*" presented by"*difficult pupils*". They were right; no transfer request was refused.

The gentlemen of the Press were made welcome too. A "Free Press" reporter visited the school in September:-

> "*The new style teaching area with its large windows, carpets, tables dotted around the room and soft chairs is a far cry from the old school style of wooden floors with iron desks in regimental order.*"

This time the news was of the school's plush interior and the "*we'll do it*" enthusiasm of the headmaster:

> "*There are plenty of interesting features in the building but immediately eye catching is the colour scheme. The teaching areas are done in bright orange, yellows, browns and greens with matching fitted carpets. Even the black-boards were of those colours. But wouldn't these attract the graffiti artists?*"

Mr. Wilson did not think so.

> "*This is the least of my worries if people take a pride in the building, which I'm sure they will, then they won't deface it.*"
>
> "*...But there are no indoor sports facilities yet,....that phase won't be completed until next year so all sports have to be out of doors on Sutton Lawn Playing fields. Another building noticeable by its absence is an assembly hall.... which cuts out morning religious assembly.*"
>
> "*But*", said Mr. Wilson, "*If there are teachers or pupils who feel they would like a religious service then this can be done.*"

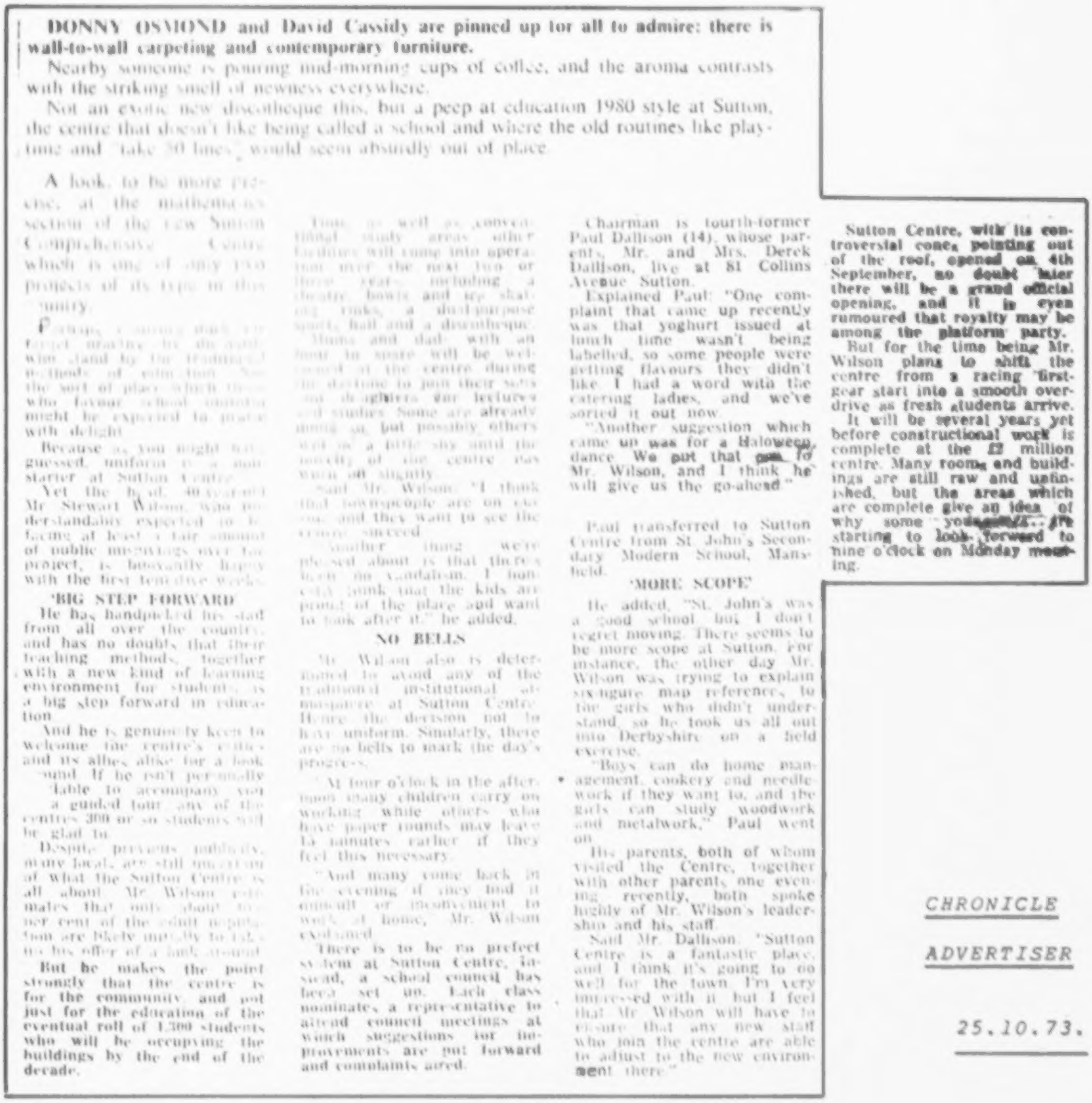
The reporters liked the headmaster: he was open with them and gave clear, quotable sentences. The headmaster was the public relations man at the Centre from the very beginning. He swept attention beyond the unfinished state to what the school was trying to achieve. He made much less fuss about frustrations than might have been expected. He campaigned rather than complained and some controversies, such as were reported over the roof cones, he simply ignored.

The CHAD reporter also returned a month after the school had opened. The concluding paragraph speaks volumes and leads to a startling linking of ideas. Those areas which were furnished were really attractive and within a month pupils had begun to look forward to school. Even though so little had been finished something unexpected had already started. The reporters were carried along by something so modern happening in Sutton:-

> "*It will be several years yet before constructional work is complete of the £2 million pounds Centre. Many rooms and buildings are still raw and unfinished, but the areas that are complete give an idea of why some youngsters are starting to look forward to 9 o'clock on Monday morning.*"

88

Page 78.



DONNY OSMOND and David Cassidy are pinned up for all to admire: there is wall-to-wall carpeting and contemporary furniture.

Nearby someone is pouring mid-morning cups of coffee, and the aroma contrasts with the striking smell of newness everywhere.

Not an exotic new discotheque this, but a peep at education 1980 style at Sutton, the centre that doesn't like being called a school and where the old routines like play-time and "take 50 lines" would seem absurdly out of place.

A look, to be more precise, at the mathematics section of the new Sutton Comprehensive Centre which is one of only two projects of its type in this country.

Perhaps, [illegible] forget [illegible] by the adults who stand by the traditional methods of education. Not the sort of place which those who favour school uniform might be expected to praise with delight.

Because as you might have guessed, uniform is a non-starter at Sutton Centre.

Yet the head, 40-year-old Mr Stewart Wilson, who understandably expected to be facing at least a fair amount of public misgivings over the project, is buoyantly happy with the first tentative weeks.

'BIG STEP FORWARD'

He has handpicked his staff from all over the country, and has no doubts that their teaching methods, together with a new kind of learning environment for students, is a big step forward in education.

And he is genuinely keen to welcome the centre's critics and its allies alike for a look round. If he isn't personally available to accompany you on a guided tour, any of the centre's 300 or so students will be glad to.

Despite previous publicity, many locals are still uncertain of what the Sutton Centre is all about. Mr Wilson estimates that only about two per cent of the adult population are likely initially to take up his offer of a look around.

But he makes the point strongly that the centre is for the community and not just for the education of the eventual roll of 1,300 students who will be occupying the buildings by the end of the decade.

Thus, as well as conventional study areas other facilities will come into operation over the next two or three years, including a theatre, bowls and ice skating rinks, a dual-purpose sports hall and a discotheque.

Mums and dads with an hour to spare will be welcomed at the centre during the daytime to join their sons and daughters for lectures and studies. Some are already doing so, but possibly others will be a little shy until the novelty of the centre has worn off slightly.

Said Mr. Wilson: "I think that townspeople are on our side and they want to see the centre succeed.

"Another thing we're pleased about is that there's been no vandalism. I honestly think that the kids are proud of the place and want to look after it," he added.

NO BELLS

Mr Wilson also is determined to avoid any of the traditional institutional atmosphere at Sutton Centre. Hence the decision not to have uniform. Similarly, there are no bells to mark the day's progress.

"At four o'clock in the afternoon many children carry on working while others who have paper rounds may leave 15 minutes earlier if they feel this necessary.

"And many come back in the evening if they find it difficult or inconvenient to work at home," Mr. Wilson explained.

There is to be no prefect system at Sutton Centre. Instead, a school council has been set up. Each class nominates a representative to attend council meetings at which suggestions for improvements are put forward and complaints aired.

Chairman is fourth-former Paul Dallison (14), whose parents, Mr. and Mrs. Derek Dallison, live at 81 Collins Avenue Sutton.

Explained Paul: "One complaint that came up recently was that yoghurt issued at lunch time wasn't being labelled, so some people were getting flavours they didn't like. I had a word with the catering ladies, and we've sorted it out now.

"Another suggestion which came up was for a Haloween dance. We put that [illegible] to Mr. Wilson, and I think he will give us the go-ahead."

Paul transferred to Sutton Centre from St John's Secondary Modern School, Mansfield.

'MORE SCOPE'

He added, "St. John's was a good school but I don't regret moving. There seems to be more scope at Sutton. For instance, the other day Mr. Wilson was trying to explain six-figure map references to the girls who didn't understand, so he took us all out into Derbyshire on a field exercise.

"Boys can do home management, cookery and needlework if they want to, and the girls can study woodwork and metalwork," Paul went on.

His parents, both of whom visited the Centre, together with other parents one evening recently, both spoke highly of Mr. Wilson's leadership and his staff.

Said Mr. Dallison: "Sutton Centre is a fantastic place, and I think it's going to do well for the town. I'm very impressed with it but I feel that Mr Wilson will have to ensure that any new staff who join the centre are able to adjust to the new environment there."

Sutton Centre, with its controversial cones pointing out of the roof, opened on 4th September, no doubt later there will be a grand official opening, and it is even rumoured that royalty may be among the platform party.

But for the time being Mr. Wilson plans to shift the centre from a racing 'first-gear start into a smooth overdrive as fresh students arrive.

It will be several years yet before constructional work is complete at the £2 million centre. Many rooms and buildings are still raw and unfinished, but the areas which are complete give an idea of why some yo[illegible]... are starting to look forward to nine o'clock on Monday morning.

CHRONICLE

ADVERTISER

25.10.73.

Both reporters seemed to have accepted that the Centre had a right to be in the middle of the town. The school and its head were "*controversial*" to be sure but any problems at Sutton Centre were generally accepted to be of a practical nature. (See Appendix 7)

The Conservatives at County Hall and the Labour men at Sutton Council let their officers meet without them being present. They had agreed on Sutton Centre and its new kind of school. The officers, in turn, trusted the teaching staff to take the initiative.

The founding staff had succeeded in designing a new order because all their innovations were compatible with each other and made one whole. For example, the block timetable was reasoned as follows:-

> *"Many factors in our plans - the nature of much of the curriculum work, the importance given to fieldwork and community service outside the building, the possibility of adults joining sessions, the open-plan building which makes a great deal of movement too disruptive - led to the structuring of the timetable in half-day blocks".* [8]

The organic quality of the design made it hard to state which innovation was the most important. It was certainly true that in order to seize the opportunity of community education the staff were proposing to take extra strain on themselves. The staff, themselves, decided to take on more work in order to enhance the experience of pupils and adults. Bob Mahy put it this way:

> *"Perhaps our key decision was to keep the size of all teaching groups to a maximum of twenty-four instead of the normal average of about thirty. It seems that in so many schools the young and inexperienced teachers battle with classes of anything up to thirty-three and thirty-four while the more experienced (and presumably more capable) teachers spend much of their time not in the classroom at all but dealing with administration. We have decided simply that every member of staff will teach full-time......This imposes strain on many staff - the administration has to be shared round and time has to be found for it in evenings and at weekends - but all agree that the smaller groups make it abundantly worthwhile, and are, in fact, essential if adults in small numbers are to be absorbed in classes .* [9]

In their design and first beginnings the staff provided equally for pupils to go out into the community and adults to come into the school. Stewart Wilson and his team were fleshing out the words of the Feasibility Study.

> *"If the Sutton Centre becomes a reality then the comprehensive school within it will go further along this line of development than any school so far in Nottinghamshire. To its pupils it will offer opportunity more varied, more imaginative, more grown-up; to the adult community a range of attractive opportunities wider than the community could possibly afford in any other way."*

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE FORMATIVE YEARS.

> *"Because the project is only just coming into existence, many of the ideas are as yet untested and may well have to be modified in practice".*
>
> *Mahy.* [1]

As the school developed it became yet more distinctive. New methods led to more new ideas. If anything the modifications in the light of experience went one stage further in realising the radical aims. The process of innovation was helped by the substantial increases each year in the number of people involved.

The phasing of the building made it possible for the founders to break in the first arrivals, who in turn could socialise the next batch of newcomers. The phasing also gave a strong sense of collective ambition as a lot of talk was about what it would be like when everything was open and working. Impatience kept up the pressure on the authorities to finish the building. For the time being both officials and politicians were really pleased with what they saw, but had not yet been able to resolve the question of how the Centre was to be run. Phasing helped the school to develop and sustain its cell-like structure but put off the necessity of deciding how the school was to be related to everything else on the site. And so some permanent and positive practices were stored alongside some problems which had not been solved.

Each subsequent year the initial pattern was repeated; feeder primaries *sent* their children of 11 and over, secondary schools outside the area and some parents tried "*to get pupils in*" and were never refused. Those "*opting in*" doubled the second, third and fourth year tutor groups in 1973/4. Sutton Centre, for its part, between 1973 and 1977 did not expel or seek to transfer a single pupil. By September 1976 the school had four full years, a staff of fifty-six and 11% of its pupils from outside the catchment area. The school's case was being accepted by the Director of Education as the staffing-ratio decision made in 1974 indicates:

> *"We only achieved the staffing necessary to give people time off in lieu by all working an eleventh session during the Centre's first year - five mornings, five afternoons and one evening or weekend session to prove that pupils and parents and the wider community could, and did, come back in the evenings for a proper two hour session in the activity of their choice.*

> *Having proved our case we were able to persuade the Director that we should have an extra injection of staff to allow for staff-time off in lieu.*"[2]

Strengthened with a 10% staffing allowance tutors were working the equivalent of five full days; developing Mode III C.S.E. courses; teaching mixed-ability, mixed-sex groups and mixed-aged groups with a common curriculum; teaching at least one 11th session; guiding their tutor group and making home visits at least twice a year. The senior and founder staff became models on many matters. They expressed the aims in some detail, led their tutor groups - and none, bar one, left. The more junior staff were often recruited after having spent their teaching practice at Sutton Centre. Quite simply the experienced idealism of the senior staff led the way and the energetic enthusiasm of the junior staff followed very closely behind.

In sociological terms there were "*norms*" developing, like staff taking their turn in the dinner queue and sitting at tables with children rather than banding together. Like wearing comfortable and casual clothes and meeting for a meal together in Home Management before an 11th session. Or belonging to the informal "Young Intellectuals Club", the self-conscious title given to Saturday night parties for which members were required to be "*old and thick*". Other young teachers in Nottingham were met this way and sometimes persuaded to apply for the next vacancies. Most staff, it seems, were on the lookout for someone who would be "*good*". For some, if not the majority, there was little life "*outside the Centre*" and a full, enjoyable life within it.

Arguments were rescued from animosity by respect for each other's teaching ability. In particular, skill with one's tutor group earned great respect. The selection of staff on the basis of character had led to a staff full of characters. It meant that each member was a force to be reckoned with.

One principle, above all, was to unite the staff; this was the principle of there being no barrier between "*out there*" and "*in here*". The principle took effect in so many different ways that the dangers of being closely observed and commenting directly on local circumstances were underestimated. The principle implied that people would come round to the Centre's philosophy if they joined in, whereas participation could result in staff being appreciated at the same time as an anxiety over their approach being fuelled. So, too, commenting upon the town could challenge powerful myths. Worse still the townspeople would resent criticism from "*outsiders*".

Stewart Wilson had said to a reporter that there was a "*sprinkling of local people on the staff*". This sprinkling became more like yeast in a bread mix as time went on. There was the Derby contingent and the small host of junior staff from Nottingham. Staff meeting discussions did touch upon whether they should all live in Sutton, as many of the senior founder staff did. But the principle of "*out there*" - "*in here*" never stretched quite far enough to make the norm a rule. Thus the staff did not feel the force of some of Sutton's own norms until stung by reactions to the failure to observe them.

The first norm had to do with relations between Sutton's classes whilst the second norm had to do with relating to individuals in those classes. The brief account of Sutton's history is important here. Four-fifths of Sutton's population were in families of manual workers. The great majority were respectable, working class: wearing a suit on a Saturday night to the pub or club; committed to their hobbies; cautious with money; firm and affectionate with their children. Sutton's middle class were just as respectable in their way, church people by and large, office holders in local good works groups and sending their children to one of Nottinghamshire's private schools. The relationship between the two large segments was distant, doggedly hostile and almost always expressed through trades union officials and local politicians.[3]

Each class had its top and bottom as well as its "*respectables*" in the middle.[4] At the bottom of the working class were the poor with whom the respectable working class had no wish to be associated. The poor, to put it bluntly, showed the respectable working class what they could easily become if they lost their grip. Whilst they might sympathize with poor children they had little time for their parents. Neither, for that matter, did they have much time for those aspiring above them who were trying to get white collar jobs, salaries, bigger and better private houses and so get into the middle class. Those aspiring were realistic and knew that their *"face didn't fit"* and that they did not talk *"leyk thart"*. But their children could make it; through education, with examination successes pushed further by private tuition. They could at least be nurses or bank clerks or teachers. Then their children would almost certainly own their own home, mix with the right people and have a secure job with regular rises and the prospect of a string of promotions.

Three working class norms come out of this sketch. From the respectables' point of view the poor are by and large a waste of time. From the aspiring working class point of view their childrens' education is fraught with anxiety; their education should lead to as many good qualifications as possible and there is no real relief until it does. As far as the respectable working class are concerned schooling varies somewhat erratically between enjoyment and endurance and getting a trade only partly depends upon a decent grasp of the basics. School is therefore a place their children go to before they have to go to work and earn a living. Attending school is very much like holding down a job - which you do in order to live comfortably and get involved in other things.

How different the norm that is from the attitude of the small, but vociferous, group of unrespectable middle classes! Such people had begun their own businesses or were failing in their management of a family business. They wished their children to attend private schools but either could not afford it or were terrified by the mannerisms. They didn't just want their children to achieve. They wanted the school to look like a grammar school or minor public school. They wanted a school they could point to with pride.

The Sutton norm is that the school responds to the aspiring working class which allies with the unrespectable middle class. This response carries along the more able children of the respectable working class even though their parents may not have great hopes of school apart from not making their children awkward and miserable. Those staff

who lived in the town knew that the *"community"* within their *"catchment area"* was made up of different neighbourhoods; residential areas at one with each other and at odds with the rest. The news in the first term that two secondary schools would be closed and annexed to Sutton Centre could be understood as more than an increase in mere size. At some future date neighbourhoods would be brought into the catchment area which were the kind of neighbourhoods that the Centre had not yet experienced. Until *"amalgamation"* the Centre would serve neighbourhoods of the unrespectable and respectable working class as well as the triangle of middle class respectability between the market place and St. Mary's Church.

The other norm referred to was that of ways of relating to the respectable working class. In essence this norm has to do with the use of nicknames. An anecdote rather than an analysis is called for here. A faceworker in Silverhill Colliery has the name "Herbert". This is not, however, his real name. Being an exceptionally shy person he found it difficult to speak with his mates underground. He was unable to ask their names and so referred to everyone as Herbert - briefly and without looking at them. After a time the younger face workers tried the name back on him; he growled but did not correct them. Within the space of a few years the taunt of being "Herbert" became the man's title and generally accepted throughout the pit. His weakness had been turned back upon him; his name refers to his pain. When, then, a well-intentioned teacher learned his name he greeted the man with a loud, cheerful *"How's it going Herbert?"* Those who heard this thought that the assumed familiarity was wrong - without necessarily knowing the reason why. As it happened another miner was nearby at the time

and told the teacher. The miner later wrote;

> *"The basis of the "character" lies in the theatre of the escape from pain by disguise. The essence of the performance has more to do with the escape and defence than it has to do with the person spending a lifetime developing entertainment skills."*
>
> *(Watson 1981: 24)*

A great strength came from not always recognising the town's timidity. Sutton Centre's 'bus took townspeople out to enjoy themselves. The first Governors' dance had been in aid of the 'bus; the vehicle which had enormous practical and symbolic significance. Having a 'bus of their own meant that classes could readily go out for fieldwork, tutors could have a night out with their group, local organisations could be ferried to special events. 26,000 miles were clocked up in the first three terms. Staff with a P.S.V. licence sat with those who wanted to take their test. The 'bus drivers became one of the most exclusive staff clubs even though each qualified driver was expected to be willing to drive voluntarily in evenings and at weekends. Stewart Wilson took the cleaners on a night out. Bob Mahy drove for the Physically Handicapped and Able - Bodied Club. The 'bus became a reason to raise money and a means of reaching out from Sutton. The 'bus and the curriculum became inseparable.

Each course director kept a departmental log (see Appendix 8). The development of the curriculum, through staff proposals and frequent meetings, was,therefore, an open book for the head, other members of staff and the advisers or inspectors who were taking a keen interest. General science had replaced the separate teaching of physics, chemistry and biology. "Centre News" carried appeals for electrical gadgets which could be studied and fixed and there was a flood of faulty electric toasters. Environmental Studies replaced geography and history with ecology. Environmental Studies, in fact, quite naturally offered the opportunity to learn about the town directly. Stewart Wilson, as one who had taught geography, put it this way:

> *"To many people their town consists of the street where they live, the road to school or work or to the local football ground, the shopping centre, the pub and for a few, the church. They have never been taught to look at their town from the point of view of seeing what is good about it - or bad about it - what is lacking or what could be improved. They have never been taught to explore their town and its immediate surroundings; to discover what is old and examine what is new".* [5]

The department held brief weekly meetings and met again during the holidays to prepare work cards. Newsheets were issued from time to time. In December 1974 the C.S.E. Mode III Syllabus was fully accepted by the East Midlands Examinations Board. Departmental policy on the syllabus, visits, projects, teaching space and discipline were regularly on the agenda. The issue of deliberate disruption by pupils was dealt with in the following way:

> "...*in most cases the performance stops when the audience is withdrawn and the child cannot assume the role of hero(ine) or comedien(ne). Therefore any reprimand more than an odd word of warning should be delivered in private to the child. Any unoccupied Course Director's office may be used for this purpose.*
>
> *If the teacher feels that withdrawal of the child for a period of the lesson is desirable, he/she should be sent, with a supply of work, to the Course Director who will try to ensure that the work is done satisfactorily. It may be necessary, in troublesome cases, for the child's own tutor to be consulted.*
>
> *Obviously the nearer home we can keep such incidents, the less large they will loom generally*".

The curriculum itself was intended to be much more than visits and visiting speakers, map reading and botany. The department resolved to follow the practical studies aspect of Science teaching. Like all other departments the staff were trying to get each year's work right. November 1974's log records:-

> "...*the discussion had been a most valuable introduction to something we mean to go on working at until we are satisfied that the second year work is as exciting and interesting as we can get it.*"

The drive was therefore towards having more than just a list of environmental studies activities; the drive was towards a definition of its place in relation to other studies. Environmental Studies felt their "*neighbours in learning*" were science and rural studies. Open evenings were shared and cooperation took place on such issues as recycling. After a period of honest doubt the log entry reads:-

> "...*We are agreed that such cooperation will not, as far as we can tell, threaten the identity or curriculum value of our subject.*"

In this small detail Environmental Studies were discovering a truth which was becoming commonplace throughout the school. Cooperation with other courses led to innovation in one's own and also meant learning how to put forward alternatives which contained these innovations but expressed them differently.[6]

Cooperation over curriculum within the school was widespread. Cooperation with local places of interest was, however, on the decline. Such places did not seem to mind the odd annual visit but they found it hard to become an integral part of the curriculum. Local Services had been asked to take up a role as teacher, and for tours to be more than token events with a stage-managed scare.

In Autumn 1975 the log reads:-

> *"Fire Station and Police Station visits will have to be dropped as they both require us to adhere to very inconvenient times. This now closes down all doors to local services (Public) as the Sewage Works and Ambulance Service stopped us last year. I suppose we are lucky to have had our run while it lasted as nine or ten visits from one school is rather much."*

This was not the kind of modification by practice which the staff had in mind. Just what did modification mean then? For a start there were duplications to be removed; for example one particular week no less than four departments were "doing trees". Next there was the syllabus to be improved; more work cards to be designed and new projects to be devised. Finally there were the ideas of a community school to be realised, ideals which spanned the chasm between a secondary school and a community school: from what kind of citizens pupils should become to which forms of support could be given to local voluntary groups? One department, Communication and Resources made the ideals its main purpose. Free of any tradition in its subject teaching Communication and Resources could serve the school, the other parts of the Centre and the community. Pupils could work directly on newsheets and posters;

they could study what was needed and how media are produced - then they made media to brighten up their tutor group area; the dining room walls and people's lives. But this kind of work could not be done in a morning or an afternoon. The block-timetable did not allow enough time for a project to be chosen, researched and completed.

Communication and Resources was made a "*withdrawal*" course for pupils once yearly. The "*core*" ten subjects and ten blocks of time were simply suspended for a few days.* (Teachers were released too and tutors in other subjects had a morning or afternoon in which to get some preparation done). Tutors visited their group to see what they were making together. The pupils were being trusted in novel ways. They researched the town and centre in small groups, they used equipment which could have been locked away from sight: cameras, photo-copiers and video machines.

Communication and Resources was committed to having the world explain itself to curious children. It turned pupils loose with questions they had prepared and the means of recording adults' answers. And there were some adults who did not want "*prying questions*" from anyone, let alone from "*a bunch of kids who ought to be at their lessons*". C. and R., as it had come to be known, did not modify in this respect at all. It became progressively better equipped, too, as printing machines were to be co-owned with the Teachers' Centre.

C. and R. and Enviro. were but two of the abbreviations and their formative experiences have been described because they were especially concerned with the unfinished building and working out in the community.

*'Basic Skills' was the twelfth block for which pupils were also withdrawn.

Neither had a settled home not least because they were courses which had not been fully anticipated as needing purpose-built accommodation. Enviro's problems worsened in the winter of 1974 and a memorandum spoke of "*being squashed to death by the Science and Home Management Departments*". The memo. concluded:-

> "*We urgently hope that all possible pressure will be applied on the Powers that Be, to make sure that the subject can eventually spread its wings properly and have the same freedom as Maths, Home Management, Creative Arts, Science etc., to develop its forward-looking techniques and ideas.*"

In Autumn 1975,when the Music Block opened, the department at last had an office, a 'phone and a coffee bar. It had moved to its third location with the help of pupils and two staff established the area during the holidays. C. and R. grew to be a full-sized teaching department and occupied the whole of the adult floor apart from the Teachers' Centre and its Warden's office. It was a "*wonder world*" of equipment and tutor group areas.

By 1975 all teaching areas and coffee bars were also tutor group areas and some tutors were entering their third year of "*growing up at the Centre together*". Memoranda circulated about what to do in tutor time, tutors held meetings with their group's other teachers and were beginning to reflect on the processes underway. One report to parents contrasted the years to date: being at ease with working conditions in the first year, achieving greater self-confidence in the second year and a higher degree of self-discipline in the third year. (See Appendix 10). There was a sense of rising pride rather than increasing problems. The pride came from the compliments of the teachers; the voluntary efforts made; the strong and different characters emerging and the fun had in outings together. It was, therefore, not just a formative period for departments and their relations with each other. There was the tutor group principle being modified by practice too. Groups of pupils and their tutors had remained together with very few changes. The tutor group practice could never settle down the way departments and their courses might; it always asked for more of the same be it the tutor's free time, the groups extra effort with each other or the parents' involvement.

There was prestige, but not a penny more, in being a tutor. Being a tutor was not parallel with being a teacher, though, because it entailed developing a whole group together rather than bringing on certain able individuals. The tutor group size had indeed turned out to be critical. It became an article of utter faith that a group was made up of twenty-four mixed ability boys and girls and no more. Practice can enshrine principle as well as modify it.

The block timetable was further illuminated by practice. The blocking of half days to a given area gave more teaching time, more potential for group and project work. Circulation was virtually cut out. It could, however, create problems for repetitive subjects like foreign languages.

The formative years included change as well as innovation: events beyond the Centre staff's control or even influence. John Watts, then headmaster of another innovative school, tellingly suggests that "*'change' is something that happens to us and 'innovation' is something that we choose to bring about*".[7] At first, change may seem like an omen for good or ill; a distant, unusual noice which can hardly be heard.

The intention to amalgamate two secondary schools at some future date has already been mentioned. Stewart Wilson quickly translated this as a priority to get to know their staffs and pupils and plan for a doubling of Sutton Centre's size. Alongside his hand picked staff there would be virtual draftees. Nearly 700 pupils would be pitched into the middle of a carefully reasonsed process for maturing local children.

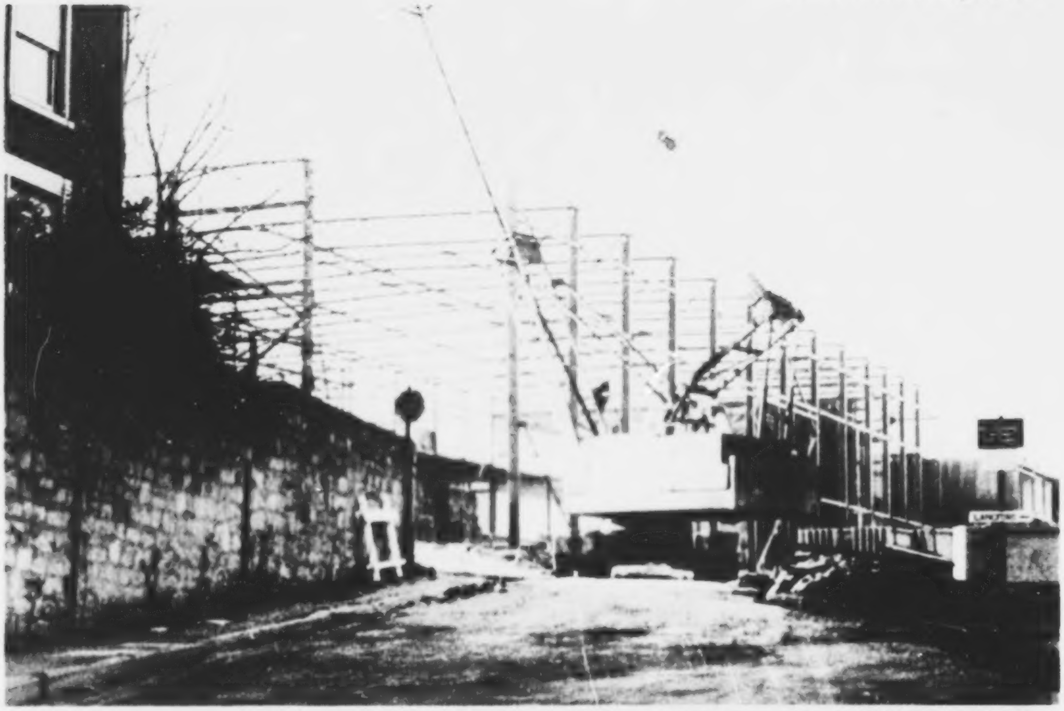
Local politics was to struggle with the implications of amalgamation too. In 1974 Sutton Urban District Council had become part of Ashfield District Council. The Clerk, Walter Laughton, retired and the County Council officials lost their chief ally in Sutton. Ashfield District

Council was purely an administrative unit as it included three towns whose relations had been indifferent or hostile since memory could recall. Kirkby-in-Ashfield was Sutton's long-standing rival and it had failed to secure either a substantial shopping centre like the Idlewells or a Leisure Complex, like that included in Sutton Centre and by then under construction. Hucknall was a market town on the other side of Annesley Forest and the home of the jump-jet. All three towns had collieries to be sure and decaying, Victorian terraced streets and vast council house estates. The implication was that three towns in a chain from the west of Mansfield to the edge of Nottingham city would be linked with each other's declining fate.

> *"Splinter groups formed in each of the towns under the name 'coordinating committee' or 'liaison committee'. The aim was to ensure that the party machine in each town was coordinated and went for some policy at meetings of the Labour Group on the Council or meetings of the constituency. The policy chosen, of course, was usually the one which benefitted the place that was asking for it."*
>
> *Watson (1981: 45)*

All councillors, Labour or Ratepayer, were chiefly loyal to their towns or villages. Just one thing united councillors from Kirkby and Hucknall and that was Sutton Centre. It stood for the last minute advantage seized by Sutton Urban District Council, a glaring example of how two townships' ratepayers would subsidise the benefits felt in a third. The commitment was resented - what was to have been a jewel in Sutton's crown became a thorn in Ashfield District Council's flesh. There was no turning back,but neither was there the enthusiasm and involvement to get the construction finished.

In fact, there was the opportunity to vent frustration upon the County Architects. In September 1974 a string of deficiencies was listed by the new Clerk and Chief Executive. These "failings" were all said to have been made by County Officials. And yet the records show no occasion upon which the facilities were sought. Rather just the opposite for in the past S.U.D.C.'s planners had not been committed to the scheme and therefore submitted a list of the major spaces required with the implication that there would be no money forthcoming



Council broadside at the planners

CENTRE PLAN ALTERATIONS

NOTTS. County Council planners have come in for heavy criticism because their design for the sports complex at Sutton Centre is considered so inadequate by Ashfield Council that they have been forced to make major alterations.

The case for the alterations was put to the Recreation and Amenities Committee on Thursday by Chief Executive Mr Stanley Needham who reported: "These alterations and additions are considered to be most essential to enable the centre to operate properly and provide good facilities which should provide considerable revenue."

And then he revealed the failings of the County Council design. He said there was no suitable changing accommodation for adults using the squash, bowls and other facilities during school hours; inadequate bar facilities, storage space and access; little space in the Ice Rink for standing or sitting around the ice, inadequate storage space for skates and shoes and inadequate changing and toilet facilities, no lounge or bar facilities in the bowls hall.

He said that to put these deficiencies right Ashfield's planners had designed a series of alterations and additions and he asked the committee for approval.

But before a decision was taken Coun. E. Adkin said: "This is another example of what happens when county planners take charge of schemes. It is time we told them that we want to see how a thing is going to work before they put it down on paper."

From Coun. Howard Tilford came the criticism that the county planners "sit in their ivory towers and design these schemes without considering the needs of the people."

And Coun. Mrs. May Butler added: "We must come to a firm resolution that we do not allow this sort of thing to happen again."

BACKED

The new plans were backed by Authority chairman Coun. Tom Stimpson who said: "If we don't proceed now we shall be dissatisfied with the finished project."

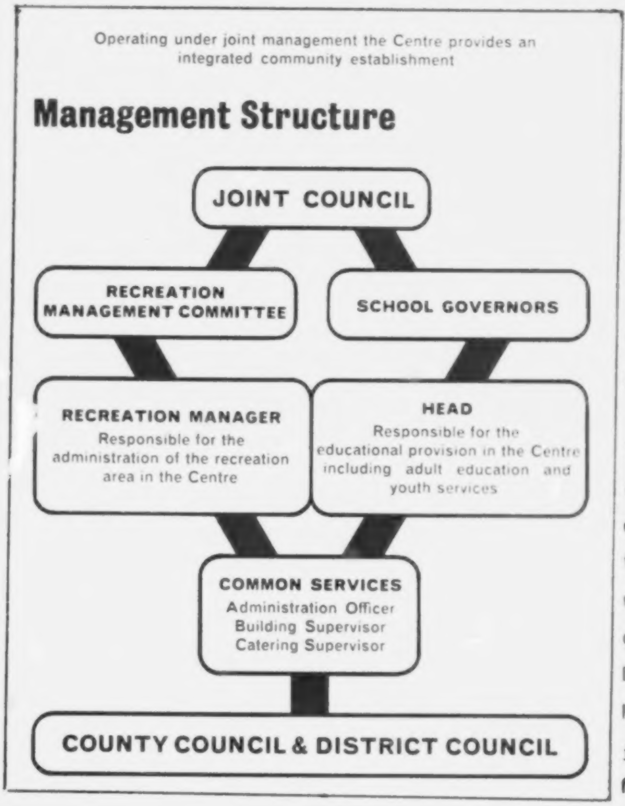
"We are at the stage now when planning should be fact and not feasibility," he said.

The committee approved the changes.

NOTTS FREE PRESS August 1974

for anything else. The councillors obviously did not know this. More importantly they were now prepared "*to have a go at County*" even if they knew better. The cordial relations between County and District broke down and were replaced with bitty negotiations, and this over a building not yet finished.

The third change is related to the second although it only seemed like a slip of pen upon paper at the time. For when the Centre brochure was re-issued the management structure had been redrawn. Perhaps it was done to mollify the District Council or perhaps the redesign was simply a mistake in copying the scheme proposed in the Feasibility Study. The management structure in the second brochure showed the common services as coming equally under the Head and the Recreation Manager. That is instead of Common Services answering the Joint Council, and the two appointees being freed from running the building, the two jobs included the house-keeping tasks and added to the existing potential for direct conflict.

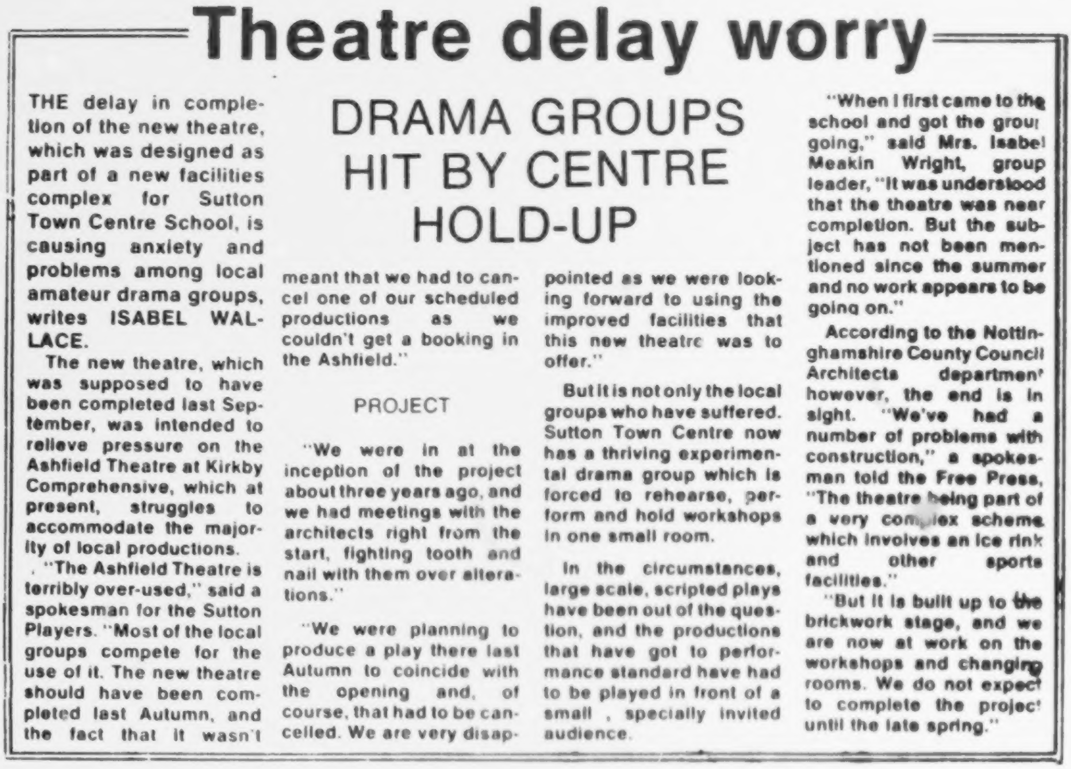

Operating under joint management the Centre provides an integrated community establishment
Management Structure
JOINT COUNCIL
RECREATION MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
SCHOOL GOVERNORS
RECREATION MANAGER
Responsible for the administration of the recreation area in the Centre
HEAD
Responsible for the educational provision in the Centre including adult education and youth services
COMMON SERVICES
Administration Officer
Building Supervisor
Catering Supervisor
COUNTY COUNCIL & DISTRICT COUNCIL

As for the Administration Officer, Building Supervisor and Catering Supervisor they would be the servants of two masters who might balance their demands and reconcile their different interests - or they might not. This new arrangement really is very different from that shown on page 57.

Then again, the diagram was just on paper. No move had been made either towards arrangements for the Joint Council or the appointments of the Common Services Managers. A Recreation Manager had been appointed but unlike the Head he had neither staff nor buildings, nor day-to-day tasks for the time being.

One question on everyone's mind

was how long would that time really be? People to whom facilities have been promised normally have a short fuse; happy to wait for a little while but not really happy to wait at all. After all people are rarely both contented and in a state of eager anticipation.[8]



Theatre delay worry

DRAMA GROUPS HIT BY CENTRE HOLD-UP

THE delay in completion of the new theatre, which was designed as part of a new facilities complex for Sutton Town Centre School, is causing anxiety and problems among local amateur drama groups, writes ISABEL WALLACE.

The new theatre, which was supposed to have been completed last September, was intended to relieve pressure on the Ashfield Theatre at Kirkby Comprehensive, which at present, struggles to accommodate the majority of local productions.

"The Ashfield Theatre is terribly over-used," said a spokesman for the Sutton Players. "Most of the local groups compete for the use of it. The new theatre should have been completed last Autumn, and the fact that it wasn't meant that we had to cancel one of our scheduled productions as we couldn't get a booking in the Ashfield."

PROJECT

"We were in at the inception of the project about three years ago, and we had meetings with the architects right from the start, fighting tooth and nail with them over alterations."

"We were planning to produce a play there last Autumn to coincide with the opening and, of course, that had to be cancelled. We are very disappointed as we were looking forward to using the improved facilities that this new theatre was to offer."

But it is not only the local groups who have suffered. Sutton Town Centre now has a thriving experimental drama group which is forced to rehearse, perform and hold workshops in one small room.

In the circumstances, large scale, scripted plays have been out of the question, and the productions that have got to performance standard have had to be played in front of a small , specially invited audience.

"When I first came to the school and got the group going," said Mrs. Isabel Meakin Wright, group leader, "It was understood that the theatre was near completion. But the subject has not been mentioned since the summer and no work appears to be going on."

According to the Nottinghamshire County Council Architects department however, the end is in sight. "We've had a number of problems with construction," a spokesman told the Free Press, "The theatre being part of a very complex scheme which involves an ice rink and other sports facilities."

"But it is built up to the brickwork stage, and we are now at work on the workshops and changing rooms. We do not expect to complete the project until the late spring."

Notts. Free Press - 24.1.75.

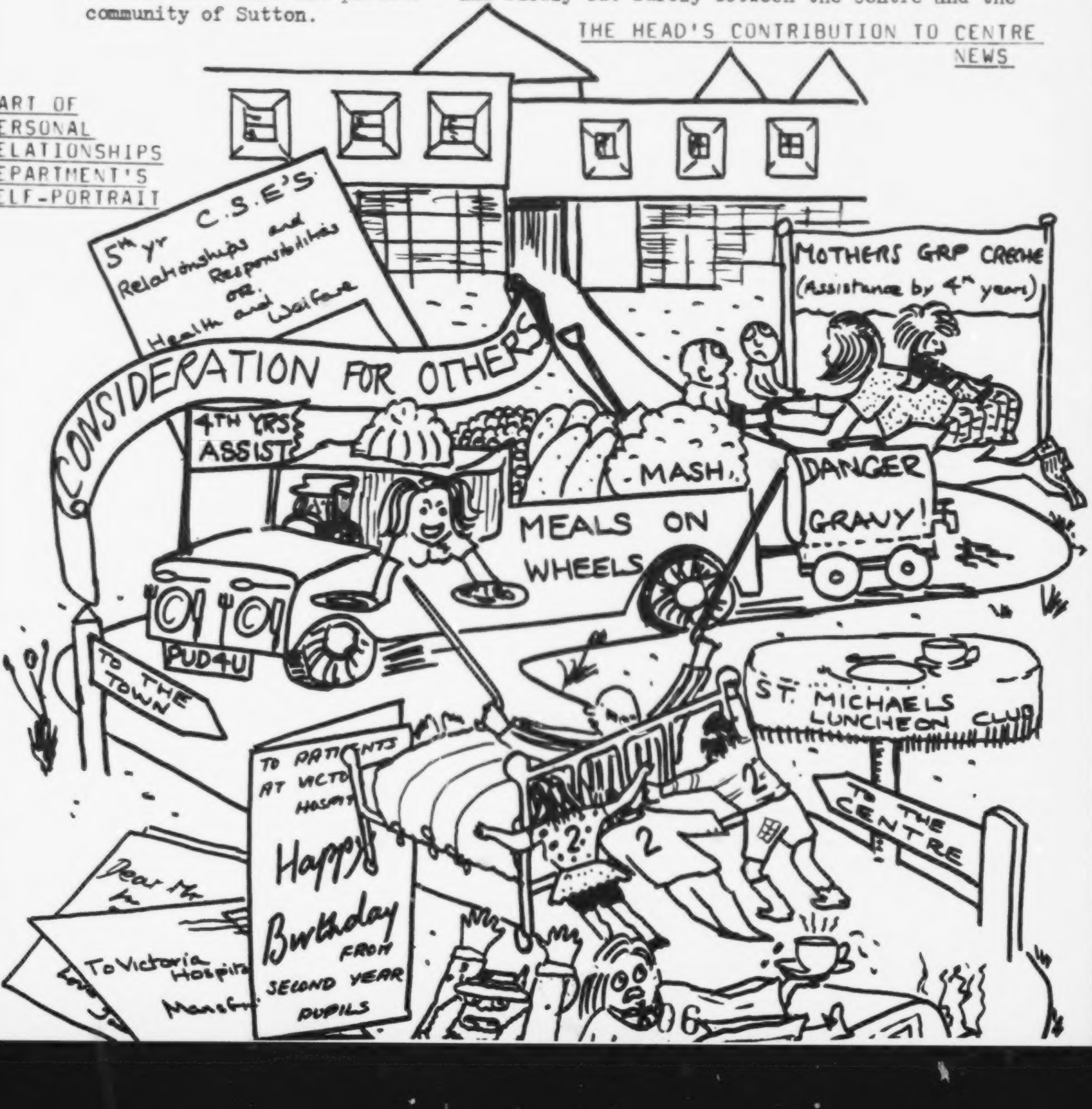
LOOKING BACK OVER THE YEAR

We are approaching the end of our first year of operation at Sutton Centre, and it is, therefore, a natural time both to look back over the year in order to assess what has been achieved and to look forward to the new academic year which will begin in September and state some of our hopes for the new year.

The abiding memory of 1973/74 is undoubtedly one of excitement for all those who have been in at the beginning of the whole scheme. But there are, of course, other memories - of unfinished buildings, of teaching staff and building-site staff having to work side by side at their respective jobs, of temporary heating and dining arrangements, of delays in the delivery of furniture, equipment, books and writing materials, of a steady stream of new pupils transferring to the Centre throughout the year - but above all, of the tremendous fund of goodwill which has existed among all those who have been connected with the Centre. This has been only too evident in the relationships which have built up in a relatively short time between the staff and young people in the Centre and between the staff and parents - and slowly but surely between the Centre and the community of Sutton.

THE HEAD'S CONTRIBUTION TO CENTRE NEWS

PART OF PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS DEPARTMENT'S SELF-PORTRAIT


5th yr C.S.E'S
Relationships and Responsibilities
OR
Health and Welfare
CONSIDERATION FOR OTHERS
4TH YRS ASSIST
MASH
DANGER GRAVY!
MEALS ON WHEELS
PUD4U
MOTHERS GRP CRECHE
(Assistance by 4th years)
TO THE TOWN
ST. MICHAELS LUNCHEON CLUB
TO THE CENTRE
TO PATIENTS AT VICTO HOSPIT
Happy Birthday FROM SECOND YEAR PUPILS
2
2
2
Dear Mr
To Victoria Hospita Mansf

CHAPTER NINE: DOWN THE RUNWAY.

"One man's bandwaggon is another man's hearse"

MacDonald [1]

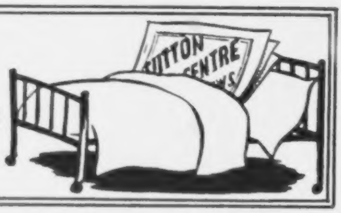
All too often a school is the imposition of an order with which a few succeed, many are dispirited and some react violently against. But at Sutton Centre so many felt solidarity that some of those who could have reacted with hostility did not do so.[2] The school had achieved a happy atmosphere.

There was no special secret formula at work here. Each of the founding principles pulled in the same direction. Parents, all parents, were met on their home ground; they were being constantly asked to give, join in and share their experiences.

Pupils attended the voluntary 11th sessions in droves: some returned every night. Maths quickly gained a reputation for excellence and was by far the most popular 11th session. Even visitors who felt unease about the style were confounded by 11th sessions. 11th sessions were mixing ages and abilities, the sexes and the generations. They were even more relaxed than the day time sessions simply because everyone who attended had chosen to be there. The presence of adults was proving to be an unqualified advantage. Staff meeting discussions on adults in class began to take stock of the advantages. When there were adults difficult children acted up less. As adults came to do something specific they reinforced project-based learning. Adults arrived a little after the class had begun and were the last to leave. They tried not to get in the way and did not watch the clock. Few parents went to classes with their own children but grandparents did. Adults became friends with the staff member concerned and took on chores which they knew they could do better than anyone else. Two kinds of 11th session developed. Those of a few adults together with children were specialising in individual learning with some attenders making very rapid progress indeed. Those which were for adults became a club, a self-managed group almost, whether it was engaged in 'Writing for Fun' or discussions around the 'Coffee Pot'. And out of '11th sessions' came the keen volunteers who staffed the coffee bars. The presence of adults in class strengthened the adult content of the coursework. The responsibility for treating children as adults was being shared with adult class members.

The effect of all this was to minimise the *'problems'* of *'adolescence'* at which point, of course, parents' interest was redoubled. For their children were receiving responsibility, trust and adult companionship in class, at break and lunch and during activities and outings. As parents realized their children were enjoying school and growing up purposefully they felt grateful and that they wanted to do something in return. Respectable parents, working class and middle class, felt drawn into the school.

putting the CENTRE NEWS 'to bed'



Did you realise that producing the Centre News - humble though it is by professional standards - takes a lot of time and effort, and that much thought is devoted to improving its presentation and layout?

The News has 'come on' a long way since the first issue, but the problem now facing the Editorial Panel is that the production resource at the Centre is stretched to the limit, and further development will require some additional help.

With this in mind, we are looking at the possibility of forming a small production team to help with the reprographics and prepare the page assemblies for platemaking - possibly during the 11th Session time at the Centre.

Would you like to help?

If you are handy with a pencil, ruler, and setsquare; if you can type; if you can use an enlarger; if you can handle a lettering pen or brush - and if you can spare some time of an evening, then please contact Dick Brader, Martin Galloway, or Dick Bird at the Centre.

Alternatively, please contact the writer at Sutton 3231.

Jim Golding. (Parent)

THANK YOU

to all our children who have looked after the Centre so well and been so pleasant to live with

all who helped with

• the people resource • the second hand shop • the sponsored day • coffee bars • the christmas raffle • tutor group camps and trips • the jumble sales • centre dances • making costumes • the rambling club • the Centre News • sports club helpers • bringing in newspaper and scrap • our work in the public library • our work in Sutton shops • listening to children read • gifts of objects and materials • the London science trips • visits and work – the fire station – the police station – the sewage works • – ambulance service swimming at the public baths •

Sorry we didn't thank all the people who kindly donated **tombola** prizes for the last dance - your help was very much appreciated. We'll be grateful for more help for the dance in September.

Norma Hardy
Jean Johnston

mothers Group

It's absolutely lovely Tuesday morning - we mothers can now sew, cook, hairdress, make-up and talk about slimming in comfort. The children are looked after by a nanny and we can get on with pleasing ourselves. I have made friends in the coffee bar where we all meet - it's easy to make friends, the atmosphere is not like school. We can also see the work our children are doing and even join in. I would advise anyone to come and join us as it helps make housework not so boring.

Jean Ward – mother of STEVEN (15½)(S.C.) JANE (14) DENISE (12)(S.C.) LESLEY (12)(S.C.) DIANE (10) COLLIEN (9) IAN (3)

SUTTON CENTRE

A Student's View!

Ian Kendrick

My first impression of the Centre, on arriving as a student filled with trepidation at his teaching practice, was one of friendliness. It took a far shorter time than I had expected to get that "accepted" feeling, which enables one to relax in a new place.

In contrast to my own traditional grammar education, the variety and intensity of activity here is at first a little bewildering. However, as I gradually found out what each department was trying to do, the relevance of activity here to the community in general became clearer.

The whole working atmosphere at the Centre is far more relaxed than one is accustomed to find in a school. Whilst the teacher still holds a certain authority over his pupils, there is far more emphasis on a "working together" to find out things.

The idea of a teacher as an all-knowing being with a valuable body of knowledge, which must be imparted to his charges, is rejected as the myth it is. The teacher still informs his pupils but is far more concerned, than before, on motivating the child and helping him to structure his own learning process and in doing so he becomes a far more credible figure to his pupil.

The final thing I want to mention about the Centre is that there is a constant search for new directions and areas to cover which can only help the learning process.

* * *

Do you have a story to tell?

Do you know about any old Sutton crafts?

Do you have an unusual job?

Do you know any work songs?

Have you written anything?

Do you have any old diaries?

Anything that would be interesting?

If you can help at all, get in touch with John Salway in the Literature and Drama Department, or anybody else at the Centre. We're all involved.

Drawings by Paul Hoof

Other adults, non-parents that is, joined in too. The '*Parents' Newsheet*' was broadened to a '*Centre News*' coverage because of this. Adults could rent rooms too. '*Rentaroom*' was begun, as the Feasibility Study had suggested, to meet the needs of all those voluntary groups with chronic accommodation problems. Artists, actors and astronomers all needed a place for meetings and in which to organise their own self-education. By 1975 the numbers of adults in classes, coffee bars and clubs were such that Sutton Centre Users' Association was formed. The Association's purpose was to pursue the aims of the Feasibility Study and it immediately began a campaign by correspondence to get the rest of the Centre opened.

At first sight it could seem that the idea with which this chapter began has by now been left far, far behind. This probably shows how little experience most of us have of happy schools. Is it really inconceivable that the pupils were happy, in part, because their parents were also happy in the same school?

Whilst some parents gained confidence when the children became more aware and articulate others did not. A link had been forged between questioning and forthright expression. This link was valued by both the respectable working class and the respectable middle class. Both required their children to be as strong as their intellect allowed and as varied as their interests could extend them. C.S.E. Mode III was made for these very purposes. The unrespectable working class - a category that was resisted vigorously by the teaching staff who thought in terms of families - were less involved but no less intrigued. When a tutor asked how an ill-dressed pupil was getting on during a home visit his mother said he was always writing. "*Look at all these pages*" she said, showing the boy's Home Management recipe book.

Parents participated in the unusual form of continuous assessment called '*Profiles*'. The Profiles were the pupil's own record of attendance, interests and achievements both inside and outside the

Centre.[3] Primarily the Profile complemented the C.S.E. work as it began with comments by the pupil, continued with an entry by the subject teacher and was then taken home for the parents to read and comment upon in turn. Each week tutor time was set aside for Profiles. They proved a massive undertaking because they took the temperature, so to speak, once a week from when the pupil first began. Stewart Wilson read them all; gathering armfuls from tutor areas during the holidays to study each child's progress for himself.

Stewart Wilson was happy - if that is the right word for increasingly determined whilst at the same time being able to take or tell a joke against himself - because he was getting his own way. He dealt cheerfully with the professional arguments against C.S.E.'s (see Appendix 11). He spoke of justice, the balanced curriculum and acceptability to employers, universities and colleges. His arguments did not convince everyone. For if he was '*right*' then nearly every other headmaster in the country was '*wrong*'.

The Centre was acting as if a common 16+ examination had already been introduced: the staff were anticipating a much discussed development expected any day. The government was considering the matter. No decision was forthcoming: Comprehensive Schools had not quickly led to comprehensive examinations. The longer the delay in their introduction the more Sutton Centre's policy stuck out as having been brought in too soon. The government edgily retreated from a dispute with the G.C.E. Boards. Sutton Centre advanced towards its first C.S.E.'s. The government weakened and the Centre hardened. Rather than the policy and the practice meeting up by the time the first intake reached the fifth year the Centre was beached by the retreating tide of government opinion.

This made the head and staff seem downright unreasonable rather than thoroughly modern. But there was a bigger problem locally. A knot formed that was typical of the national struggle between '*traditional*' and '*progressive*' forces; progressives supporting the development of the individual and traditionalists the good of the state. Progressives grant that the fears are real enough but try to prove that they are unfounded. Traditionalists fear that they are being ignored and repeat their misgivings. Stewart Wilson, it must be said, sometimes shouted traditionalists down - but that did not silence them when elsewhere. Traditionalists, who came especially from the aspiring working class and the first generation middle class, thought that he had not listened to them. They thought that the well-being of the school was made by the advancement of their individual children; that the good of the whole was the success of the parts. Quite literally Stewart Wilson could not convince them that a model for the good of all was the best for each single pupil; it was difficult to convince many people of this.

Why, then, should the staff have been happy? They had more work in every direction and knew of uneasiness over examinations and first name terms. It is true that they had played a large part in the choice of department members but compatibility of character or commitments was not enough on its own and nor was the simple fact of liking children. Stewart Wilson's leadership and its diverse diffusion by the deputies and course directors was the key. Unpopular though the opinion may be, teachers like moral, inspirational leadership. As one course director put it *"he stood in the prow of the boat, head high, pointing forward and we all rowed like mad!"*

Stewart Wilson's leadership gave rise to staff initiatives: to yet more growths in a season of growth. It was this doubling of creativity which gave cause for staff happiness. Bursts of laughter were common when staff were recalling their latest stories with each other. Some of those stories, tales of growths out of growth were telling of more practices which would become part of the Centre's fabric; more connections being made between teachers, adults and children.

Suspended weeks began in 1974. Having simplified the timetable to 10 courses, 10 blocks of time and withdrawal for '*Communications and Resources*', both courses and timetable were literally suspended for two whole weeks during the Autumn and Summer terms. First, tutors chose activities they wished to offer. Often tutors combined across departments, sometimes they went off camping with their groups and usually the tutor's own hobby or interests played a large part in their choice. Activities ranged from first aid to field trips, from seasonal pursuits like Christmas cooking to discovery projects or science fiction stories. After some negotiation over how many activities involved going out and overlaps of interests the list of choices was circulated in the weekly Bulletin. Pupils discussed the alternatives during tutor time and put their first and second choice on a ballot paper. Even in 1974 over 20% elected to do maths all week and so extra staff had to be drafted in, staff whose topic had not proved viable. The psychology of suspended weeks was simple, staff and pupils chose what they wanted to do. There was a broad mix of years in all activities and adults joined in. A three-way relationship was set up in which the pupils and adults volunteered. Parents and adults who attended 11th sessions formed the majority of those on suspended weeks.

As had happened at Staplyton School, adults showed a particular interest in printing and graphics. Adults employed in these fields rarely have the chance to do a job just as they would like it. Every active adult discovers a need for media skills. The production of 'Centre News' (from which so many illustrations in this section are taken) offered adults and children the experience of writing, illustration, layout, printing and distribution. It demanded an enormous amount of work from C. and R's staff. And 'Centre News' was a growth point for all kinds of offset litho work. Tutor groups produced newspapers during their project time. The literature and drama department began 'Sparks' a magazine of prose and poetry. Local churches like St. Mary's began tentatively to improve the standard of the Parish Newsletter. Centre News carried the head's "*state of the union*" message - his end of term review for pupils, parents and the growing ranks of volunteers. Adults, too, like to be reminded of achievements sometimes.

So far Sutton town has been variously described as close-knit families, occupational communities, neighbourhoods and overall a town in which there are conflicts both within and between the working and middle classes. All these images are rather static and may even make

people look rather like the moles which give Sutton its *'burrow status'*. Each grouping is a network as well though. Messages are passed, making advertising very much a last resort. Sutton's merchants did not have to shout as conversation would carry news of their goods and bargains. The word was passed round about Sutton Centre too. Within a year of opening there were so many adults attending "Basic Skills" that the leading volunteer had to break away to form Adult Literacy. A growth like this was contributing to a feeling that the Centre must be unique. Adult Literacy had grown out of Basic Skills in a comprehensive school. There was no Adult Literacy elsewhere in the town at the time. It was an idea being talked about and was soon to have a television series to stimulate demand. By that time older Sutton pupils would be attending Adult Literacy classes with their 'own' adults and volunteer teachers.

Another way of exploring happiness is, therefore, through the creation of uniqueness; through being there first and by your own route; through the strength of having invented your own administration. These are the details of what we call achievement.

Performances in the town's shopping precinct of music and drama, especially at Christmas and during suspended weeks, were achievements intended to bring happiness out of the Centre and into the lives of Sutton folk. Many departments treated the Idlewells as a theatre with a built-in audience. Off they went to please with songs and smiles, to provoke shoppers with youthfulness. Eric Midwinter had been writing about taking education into Liverpool's department stores.[5] In Sutton the performers massed under the clock to the uneven rhythm of flapping flagropes. 'Maths in the Precinct' included weighing shopping and measuring the flow of customers. C. and P. put on a 60's Roadshow with a display, dancing and copying old photographs.

As before, teachers at other schools thought it was silly or more simply just not for them. The proportions who were actually for or against are not known. What matters is that even if 98% were in favour and 2% were against there was disagreement. When the time came to give a balanced account, the British sense of fair play would most likely have the debate as a matter of 50/50; a knife edge of right or wrong, of attack and defence. Even if there was an overwhelming support for the school, mountains could be made out of every molehill of opposition.

Stewart Wilson and the senior staff put up what science fiction writers call a *'force field'*. The staff, pupils and adults *'within'* were protected from the distraction of outrage. At the same time they were also protected from realizing just how dangerous controversies were becoming. Stewart Wilson sensed that opposition from certain quarters could be damaging - particularly when the links between them were pulled taut with the tension of giving him *'get into line messages'*. He addressed Rotary and any group who asked him to speak. For the time being there was no open conflict and Stewart Wilson was making his regular connections with the Labour Party's network. He was enormously proud of his school's governors and brought them closer and closer to the realizations of what it was like to be an ordinary teacher, pupil or parent.

The openness to all, the willingness to accept anyone was little short of a weakness. Universal trust can sometimes look more like an unwillingness to learn how to be a good judge of character. There was bound to be a major crisis resulting from the 'open to all' policy. The question was "*a crisis for whom*?"

Teachers were faced with two tutor groups of older more difficult pupils; the rush of rejects which had been volunteered by other schools. The groups were neither mixed ability nor local primary taught. For tutors the crisis was how to teach two groups whose common denominators were damage and rejection. Environmental Studies log for October 1974 notes:-

> *"Third years have been given work of a fairly conventional type, almost amounting to comprehension exercises based on photocopied passages from books. They like the work and work hard generally. As this 'works' with them, and is a means of keeping two very difficult groups happily occupied, we feel we must bury our qualms over the lack of progressive educational methods and keep up this policy for the sake of 'Society in general'".*

In Sutton, though, the Centre was gaining a reputation as a liberal school good for acting and music but not so good for academic subjects. The Centre was the subject of gossip; whispered words which have a clear target but a source which is difficult to trace. Gossip and scandal are like two twins; they look alike but the latter can be much more hurtful than the former. By 1975 six rumours had reached the Centre regarding itself. (See Appendix 12). They were given a spirited reply; met and challenged by two senior staff as unwarranted, mean-minded, half-truths. The rumours were put into print though. Some adults with a crisis of confidence may have been reassured; others may have thought that at last their words were getting through. Strong denials of gossip and rumour reinforces both sides. But the six rumours were not the crisis as far as Stewart Wilson was concerned.

Sutton Centre accepted a rejected teacheras well as rejected pupils. One Mansfield comprehensive head complained that his school's reputation was made up of the number of arson attacks it had suffered on the one hand and the sex education given by one teacher on the other. When that headmaster could no longer cope Stewart Wilson took the teacher on at the personal request of the Director of Education.

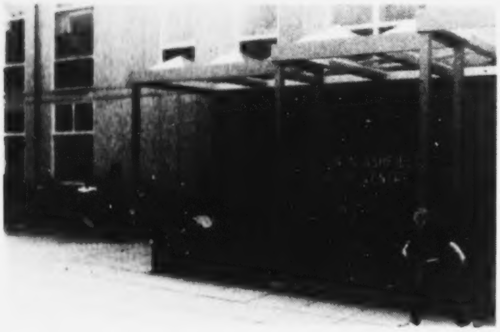
The teacher divided his time between Environmental Studies and Personal Relationships. The latter really was a Sutton Centre creation spreading from comparative religion to contemporary politics, from health education to sex education, from what citizens ought to know to community service and work experience.

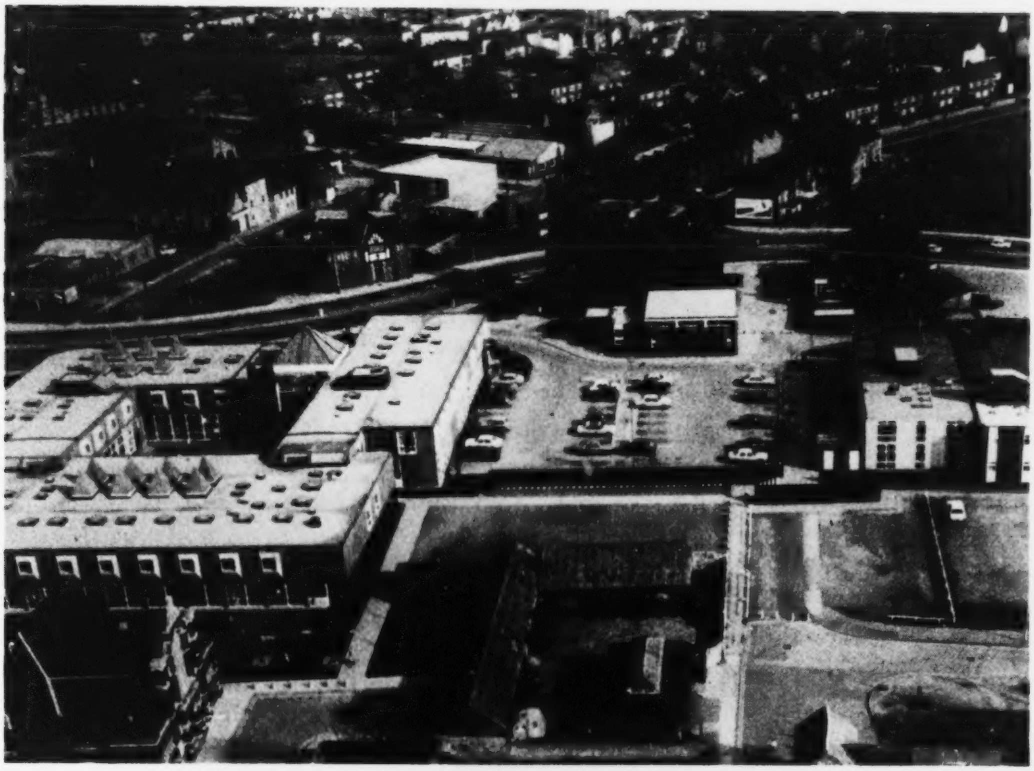
Within weeks the teacher found a niche in reading accounts of his adolescent sexual experiences to older pupils. Stewart Wilson forbade this and the teacher announced that he had penetrated the veneer of liberal thought and punctured the repressive conventionality beneath. He was dismissed; he appealed. Stewart Wilson spent more than a month piecing together a cast iron case.

The hearing was covered by national newspapers, Sutton Centre made

Page 3. of the "Sun". From a distance the trial was a classic case of a libertarian teacher being butchered by the axemen of an educational authority. Stewart Wilson never wavered in his determination. He performed an almost impossible feat for the authority: a teacher was *'successfully sacked'* for being a *'bad'* teacher. On the face of it Stewart Wilson was an enemy of the far-left. In any future fight with traditionalists of the right there would be no *'support'* from the other end of the political spectrum. The case actually showed that Stewart Wilson put definite boundary limits upon his staff's innovations.

What is surprising is that the school was so little affected by the *'crises'*. Either they were quite unimportant or there were so many reasons to be cheerful - or both. For although the phases of completion were being stretched out, space had not yet become a problem. When the Health Centre opened next door it brought a prickle into car-parking problems but at least the general practice was on the other side of a car-park. Sexism, the assumption of superiority by men, was not approved of by the teaching staff although still very much the taken-for-granted natural order in medical circles. The prickle referred to was a reflection of sexism's *"superiority"* as the Health Centre's doctors expected an official personal car-parking space regardless of how little they might care to use it. There were incidents of teachers blocking in doctors' cars and vice-versa: moments of conflict that were specific to different levels of Sutton's state sector middle-class. The doctors were not amused.





School to the left, Health Centre to the right

Staff Car Park in the middle.

There were other flash points in which class sentiments probably played a part. Teachers expected cooperation with District Council officials and this was not always forthcoming. Environmental Studies had Sutton's last remaining mill made a listed building and hoped, after making a surrounding garden, that the Council would take it over. But appointments to meet planners on the matter proved abortive. There was sufficient flexibility in the coursework to be able to change projects. The Reservoir became the next to be cleaned up. In the evenings and weekends even more adults and pupils came forward to clean the *'Res'* than had volunteered to recondition the Mill. But although the *'good'* may have triumphed over the *'neglect'* local feathers may have been ruffled by Centre generated enthusiasms.

The teaching staff had their own large reservoir of confidence upon which they could draw. The majority of school teachers are probably first generation middle-class or are the sons and daughters of teaching families. Teachers tend to marry teachers and spend their social life with other teachers.

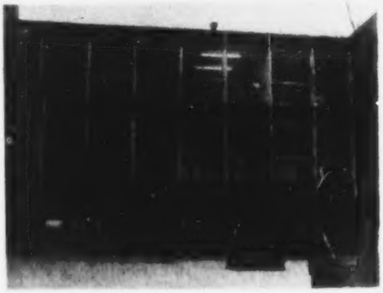
By and large their background and occupation leads them to a ghetto-like existence.

Sutton Centre's teachers included more direct-grant, public school and professional background parentage then the town's people had ever seen in a school before. To Suttonians the teachers often looked and sounded as though they were upper class; they approached the town's top people on their own terms. As far as the pupils and parents were concerned they exuded confidence. As one parent governor put it *"they breath life into the place and we are grateful for it"*.

In 1975 Nottinghamshire made a change in governing bodies: with seven councillors were three staff governors, three parent governors and two pupil observers. Stewart Wilson greeted the change as a step in the right direction. He was pleased that there were 10 candidates for parent governorships. Labour, now in control at County Hall as well as in the District, seemed to be able to accept a widening of the franchise in the control of schools. Sutton Centre was quick to use the involvement of a school's catchment area as its constituency. This was not at odds with respectable working-class interests. It even showed what alliances were possible with the respectable middle-class when they had the interests of a school in common. Nottinghamshire was not alone in benefitting from an upsurge of interest. When asked if the emergence of this new kind of political constituency could survive or would be quickly broken up by political leaders a Coventry official with parallel experience said:-

> *"This recognition requires humility on the part of the newly enfranchised and forebearance on the councillors' side. But our experience convinces me that acceptance is possible given that there are no upheavals in local elections and that there is less spiralism than in the past"*.

Sutton Centre had been conceived during a Conservative administration and began to function under Labour control. It looked as though there need be no problems even if there were upheavals at County Hall. Perhaps it could even mean that Sutton Centre was out of the political arena by being one commitment over which both major parties were agreed.



A final factor in the school's favour was the promotion of James Stone from Deputy to Director of Education. He was increasingly identified with what the school was trying to do. In an article published in February 1975, James Stone related the school's interesting, though small steps towards involvement with its community, to the avowed aim of bringing "*the education of Sutton children out of the monastery into the market place of life*". [7]

Sutton Centre Library

Photographs from the Second Brochure - Adults in Every Picture.

SAVE IT
MR BIRD'S GROUP

Needlework Area

Dining Room

Woodwork Area

Coffee Bar

HEAD's END OF YEAR REPORT

First of all let me give you some facts and figures. The academic year 1974/75 has seen the number of pupils on roll grow from 307 to 537 and the number of full-time teachers from 24 to 31. Several additional parts of the building have come into operation during the year. These include the Youth Centre, The Music Block, the Day Centre, The Dining Area and main kitchen, the Careers Office, Adult Education teaching areas and office, the main Art area (previously used as our temporary dining accommodation), the Pavilion and the remaining areas of the playing fields.

This has been a year of consolidation for all the teaching departments in the Centre building on what we had started in our first year of operation. Most departments have now built up to three members of staff and this has obviously helped in the development of work schemes and in the range of courses offered by each department. This has been particularly noticeable in our 11th sessions when thirty-seven different evening activities have been put on for our boys and girls since last September ranging from Mathematics, Science and Family German to Woodwork, Sailing and Tennis and in our suspended timetable week when pupils were able to make their choice from nineteen different activities. The suspended timetable-week was certainly one of the most successful developments during the year proving that some boys and girls can spend half a week or even a whole week studying subjects such as Mathematics, English and French without losing their concentration - as well as providing the opportunity for those who wanted to follow something through from start to finish during the course of the week in such activities as Mural Painting, Dress-making and Drama.

There have been many high points in the year but those which come readily to mind are the visit to Paris for parents, pupils and staff, the Christmas week of Drama and Music in the Precinct, the development of the Centre Band and the many public performances by the Centre Choir, the number of week-end or holiday-time camping and outdoor pursuits trips organised by staff (we estimate that nearly half the pupils in the school will have been on one of these trips by the end of July) and the success of such joint staff, pupil. and parent ventures as the Rambling Club and the Family German group. On the Sports front we have had inter-school and district competitions in rugby, soccer, hockey, cross-country running, cricket, athletics, tennis and sailing. Our 1st year rugby team went through the season undefeated and the 1st year soccer team reached the final of the Mansfield and District Cup. Four of our pupils are District Champions at Athletics and one of our girls is the County Cross-Country Champion but perhaps the most pleasing feature of the Athletics calendar was the fact that over 80% of our 1st and 2nd year boys and girls entered for at least one event on Sports Day.

Other very pleasing aspects of life in Sutton Centre have been the way our boys and girls have assisted handicapped people from the Day Centre during the lunch-hour - and the way several mums and other friends of the Centre have continued to run our coffee bars for us throughout the year. We couldn't manage without you and your help is very much appreciated by pupils and staff alike.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute once again to the help and support we have had from the Chairman of the Governing Body, County Councillor Dick Anthony and members of the Governing Body, and to the loyalty and devoted work given to the Centre by all members of the staff whether they be teachers, youth workers, secretaries, caretaking and cleaning staff, kitchen staff, technicians, librarian, nurse and groundsmen. They have continued to pull together in a remarkable way which not only makes Sutton Centre a very pleasant place to work in but has also ensured that the Centre has maintained the happy and friendly atmosphere it has had since it opened in September 1973. Long may it continue!

STEWART WILSON

CHAPTER TEN: THE CENTRE TAKES OFF.

"In air, as on earth, it is safest to fly high".

Kipling.

By September 1976 the Centre was off the ground. The school had made the running. Its curriculum was attracting adults as well as pupils. The commitment to community development had come to mean the willingness to be a community centre. And so as other parts were opened all manner of cooperative ventures began. It is these two aspects, the success of the school in its own terms and the innovations with other smaller agencies that gave each week its high spots. The County Architect, having taken stock of what was happening, exclaimed *"Good God, the thing is actually taking off!"* [1]

This chapter's purpose is to assemble the evidence which supports such a claim. Each piece of evidence contributes proof that the Feasibility Study's aims and objectives were not mere phantasies. The overall point being made is that the Centre had the profound feeling of a "community within".

By 1976 the Centre had become strong, although the science with which to test its strength was rather weak in comparison. For many members, being airborne as it were,proof did not seem to be a big issue at the time. In truth, the academic year 1976/77 was not the precise moment of take off. Stewart Wilson's *"reports"* at the beginning of the previous year had spoken of *"confidence"* and his end of year report had taken the themes of *"consolidation"* and *"highlights"*. As far as he and his staff were concerned take off probably began on what they called Day One.

What exactly is the *"feel"* that the evidence is supposed to refer to? First the great sense of movement, the quickening momentum as more energies fuelled the thrust. Secondly the air of confidence, even an arrogance at times, as if to say *"we are on the up and we know it"*. There was no paralysis by fear, no compromise by which to be later despised. Thirdly there was exhilaration. Even the most cynical visitors recognised the atmosphere in the evenings - although they often felt an unease as a result. The place was teeming with activity. The latter is not surprising because the Centre had been steadily filling. Tutor groups occupied every available space; teaching areas, coffee bars and even the snack bar had notices, displays and were being regularly used morning, afternoon and night. Indeed, many spaces could not have taken more than 24 pupils comfortably anyway and much of the feeling of comfort came from the furnishings and their absorbtion of sound. The evidence pointed to the Centre being bright and busy, packed but not over crowded.

In September 1976 the school had four full years of pupils and a teaching staff of fifty-six. A close inspection of the registers revealed that 11% of the pupils come from outside the catchment area. Sutton Centre had been "*found*" by parents living as far afield as Mansfield, Pinxton, Selston and Kirkby. Parents in one Selston street had organised their own transport rota and became some of the Centre's most loyal supporters. The rate of applications for transfer to Sutton Centre rose from a trickle of referrals to a steady stream of letters to the Head.

The governing body set up a special committee to hear appeals for admittance.[2] Twice they almost decided to limit those admitted from "*outside*" to the brothers and sisters of pupils already attending. On each occasion Stewart Wilson had previously met all the parents and pupils and was able to argue their case for them. The Governors, by 1976, were well versed in the tutor group principles and ruled that the maximum size of 24 be not exceeded. Four additional tutor groups had been created between 1973 and 1976.

Those joining in this way missed the special arrangements which had been developed for local parents and pupils. First year pupils returned to their *"old"* primary schools, as the following telephone conversation shows:-

> *"Is that.....Primary School? Hello, I'm a first year tutor at Sutton Centre. Two of my group would like to come back and tell your fourth years what it's like here. You know, assure them that they won't be beaten up in the toilets and how exciting it all is..."*

Parents were visited before their children started at Sutton Centre. Their child was given a booklet and so were they; the child's was called "Welcome: Come and Enter Sutton Centre", whilst that given to the parents was called "How to Use Your Centre". The child's booklet was not a list of do's and dont's: There was warm and positive phrasing and a cartoon on most pages. For example the page on The Code of Conduct read....

> *"We have a code of conduct for all users of the Centre, both young and old.*
>
> *We would like to think that you might wish to set yourselves the following standards when you join the Centre:*
>
> - *Attend regularly.*
> - *Arrive on time, morning and afternoon.*
> - *Take a pride in the way you dress and in your personal appearance.*
> - *Work to the best of your ability, and in all subjects.*
> - *Make full use of the facilities and opportunities the Centre offers you.*
> - *Do the best you can for the Centre, your tutor group, your parents, and yourself.*
> - *SHOW CONSIDERATION FOR OTHERS.*

The notes for the guidance of tutors on home visits had the following as the sixth point to cover:-

> *"Find out which parents would like to help in the Centre. Would they help in coffee bars, listen to slow readers, use some skill they have to help children (craftsmen, photographers, local historians, etc.) Would they help with fund-raising - jumble sales, dances, fetes, etc. Would they go on C. and R.'s roll of people as resources if they have special knowledge or interests?*
>
> *Now is, of course, an ideal time to plug opportunities for adults in the Centre."*

The family was invited to tour the school together before the end of the summer term to see for themselves. The new teachers, for their part, had a large file of documents and an in-service training day. The training day was intended to familiarise them with the community's characteristics as well as the Centre's practices. If the sessions began with school matters then there they stayed, so the morning was devoted to learning about the town.

A Foundation week had been developed for pupils. For their first week, apart from tours of the Centre, talks in the theatre, films and the "Sensorium", the group stayed in their area and christened it with decorations and identities like *Ian's Horrors, Rutter's Nutters* or *Pete's People*. Initiates were adding phrases to the Centre's language. The "Sensorium" was one of the fun parts of the week. Each pupil was led blind-folded through rooms full of '*things*' to touch, smell and taste. They were being "*videoed*" by pupils who had recently been through the experience themselves. The latter then showed their film to the next group and explained how to use the camera.

The elaborate introduction to Sutton Centre made two separate points. Implicitly the constraints of compulsory schooling were played down. Explicitly parents and pupils were given a range of activities from which to select.

"Eleventh sessions" offered to adults a curriculum choice which combined elements of a Furtner Education College; a local Adult Education Service; a second chance at school and a community centre. Every evening there were at least ten sessions to choose from. The library opened every night for private study too. Between 1973/74 there was no charge made for adults attending evening sessions because the staff themselves were not being paid. When the staffing allowance was introduced adults coming to daytime or evening classes were asked to pay 35p. each time. There was no membership card, course fee or enrolment night, just 35p. to 'Pay as you Learn'.

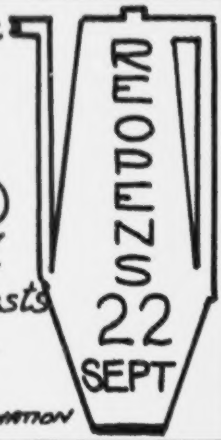
For adults there were special 11th sessions like Coffee Pot; family sessions like Family German or taking a chance in the mainly children's "classes". Coffee Pot's members were largely separated or divorced women. It began as an eleventh session which invited speakers and organised trips. Gradually it came to run itself, just like the Rambling Club. Family sessions were offered in music, languages and technical subjects. The session registers showed a tapestry of attendance which varied with shift-work and the approach to learning. Adults tended to do something intensively, give it a rest and then do something else. The courses which ran like clubs, Family Spanish for example, or those which led to 'A' levels had more regular attendances.

Attendances at 11th sessions had risen to more than 15,000 a year. In 1976/77 Sutton Centre pupils' attendances equalled one per child per week. One quarter of the total were adults, one fifth were pupils from other schools (primary and secondary) and a pattern was clearly established. Mathematics was the most popular with three evening sessions and never less than sixty attenders. More third and fourth year pupils attended; they were older and working on their C.S.E.'s. Home circumstances played a part too. In contrast to many of the pupils' homes the Centre was spacious, warm and quiet. During the summer term there were many more outdoor eleventh sessions such as tennis and sailing on the reservoir.

Those adults working for a voluntary group's needs soon learned that they could "rent-a-room" at 5p. per hour per head in which to rehearse, practice, play and have meetings. Two lecture theatres and three rooms were given the priority of "outside

TWO ACTIVITIES FOR ADULTS ARRANGED BY THE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS DEPT. SUTTON CENTRE

3rd yr coffee pot


REOPENS 22 SEPT

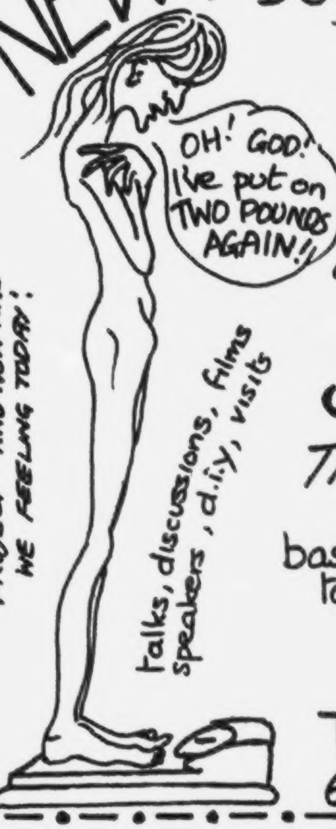
Wednesdays 7~30

social, recreational, educational activities providing a variety of interests for adults in the 20~40 age range.

A warm welcome to singles/couples

★ USE COUPON BELOW FOR MORE INFORMATION

NEW!


OH! GOD! I've put on TWO POUNDS AGAIN!

CARTOON FROM HEALTH EDUCATION COUNCIL PROJECT 'AND HOW ARE WE FEELING TODAY!'

Do you possess a body ?

DO YOU UNDERSTAND IT ?

come & learn about your most valuable assets !

a course for adults, parents, senior pupils

Health Today

THE INSIDE STORY OF YOU!

talks, discussions, films speakers, d.i.y, visits

including:

basic knowledge,
topical problems,
family concerns,
individual fears.

GUARANTEE OF MORE VALUE TO YOUR HEALTH THAN ANY ADVERTISED REMEDIES

TUESDAYS
6·45 p.m. SEPT 21 on. ★

I WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION ABOUT coffee pot / Health Today

RET^N SLIP TO ★
P.R. DEPT
SUTTON CENTRE
HIGH PAVEMENT S in A

NAME ________________
ADDRESS ________________
____

MANSF'D 52171 ________________

BK

groups;" from chess to football referees, from rock bands to drama groups. This facility was still available during school holidays.

Some adults became involved in the Centre by having a regular commitment. Twenty-four volunteers staffed the coffee bars. One such adult was Uncle Jim, whose coffee bar in "*Personal Relationships*" teaching area came to take his name. Jim is a retired miner whose nephew was mourning his father's death so he came with him for a while and then settled into a place where his nephew could find him easily. The really dedicated adults got involved in the Sutton Centre Users' Association. The Association applied pressure to have the first chaplain replaced and organised a petition to get the Sports Centre open to the public. The Association formed an Education Group which was concerned with opportunities to learn throughout the Centre. S.C.U.A. then produced the adults' booklet "How to Use Your Centre".

It became apparent that adults were having a "career" through the Centre: beginning as 11th session attenders, continuing as volunteers and then becoming involved in the politics through S.C.U.A. Adults were given a sense of membership of the Centre, membership in their own right.

The pupils, too, were experiencing incorporation as the Profiles embodied elaborate rights. Profiles had become a personal diary rather than a file of dusty reports. Pupils often drew pictures in their early years. Slowly these hardbacked books became thicker as subject tutors wrote comments, the pupils replied and the profiles were taken home for parents to read and then write their comments upon. Profiles belonged to the pupil. The tutor's comments tended to be encouraging and hopeful. Some may have resorted to a report writing code where, for example, "*a pleasant and constructive member of the group*" may have concealed the opinion "*slow but harmless*". But most tutors wrote a close study of the term's work. Pupils' parents, in contrast, were more direct and prone to sharp criticism. One, for instance, read "*I know you are not trying hard so stop pretending*".[3]

By 1976 tutor group time had become organised and the groups' notice boards usually showed that the weekly Bulletin was attended to on Mondays and Profiles on Fridays. The Bulletin was everybody's means of communicating with everybody else on matters ranging from the week's events to items for sale; from 'lost and found' to French vocabulary. The Bulletin also gave the attendance *"results"* for the tutor groups, those with 95% and over; a special commendation for the "100%ers" and a "buck up column" for those close to the generally accepted minimum of 90%. During each term the group redecorated its area and was inspected by the Head for the K.S.C.T. (Keep Sutton Centre Tidy) awards. Every six weeks or so the group would become a T.U.G. (Tidy Up Gang) and clear up around their area - both inside and outside the building. Consequently the strong sense of territory was extended well beyond the group's immediate area. There were no unloved, uncared for spaces and the cleaning ladies felt that their work was being appreciated and supported. Signs in each teaching space read: *"The cleaning lady in this area is...."*. (There had to be an agreement to keep spaces reasonably clear of activity so that cleaning could take place in the "buffer time" of 4.00p.m. - 6.00p.m. One cleaner spoke for many when she said *"You want to get it spotless - to get it like your own home"*.)

Curriculum innovation continued as did the practice of suspended weeks. Creative Art and Design, for example, covered areas of work in Art, Home Management and Technical Studies. The fourth year pupils were faced with the choice of nine modules from a list of thirty-three. Eleven of these choices were as follows:-

> Science preserves Food; Camping Cookery; Christmas Cookery; Quick Meals; Eating in A.D. 2000; Cheap Meals; Entertaining; Slimming; Making clothes; Toy Making; Soft Furnishing.

Tutors soon found that fourth year boys chose camping cookery and making clothes - particularly because the latter included making tee-shirts and printing slogans of the day upon them. Option 28 in the suspended week list of 30 for summer 1977 reads:-

> *"Drama and the Theatre - Isabel and Sue.*
> *John Forrester of Sutton gets caught up with events one day in Nottingham. Come and join the fun, fighting, gun-smoke, cannon! Lights and sounds, the show of the century and you could be in it."*

Option 29 was:

> *"Community Service - Gill Pike.*
> *Will consist of group activities taking over a playgroup, an infants' class, day centre, O.A.P.'s home."*

Mathematics during suspended week took a light-hearted approach some curve stitching and origami. In December 1976 28% of pupils chose to do mathematics all week.

Suspended week options were discussed at the weekly meetings of school council. In 1976 school council had many weighty matters to consider. The year began with a fresh draft of the 'Code of Conduct' which put more emphasis upon clothing and appearance than it had done in previous years. The Chairman of the School Council had become an observer on the Governing Body. In practice, the governors often turned to him to ask what the pupils'opinions were. The Chairman of the School Council was also a member of the small School Fund Committee which met to discuss how funds raised by staff and pupils should be spent. School Council had introduced a '*Silly Hats Day*' as one of its fund-raising activities. All pupils and staff who forgot to wear a hat on the appointed day were 'fined'. The proceeds were paid into the School Fund which supported the 'bus and made grants to 11th sessions.

The staff had the following kinds of things to say:-

- everything is expected of you;
- you have to give so much energy to the place;
- we rely on talking with everybody;
- everything depends on everything else;
- the system is so delicate;
- we are developing a democracy.

Tutors were getting a large measure of their social education from home visits. Stewart Wilson had put the principle forcefully....

> "*This pastoral role isn't just concerned with dealing with a child's behavioural or emotional problems. It is concerned with his or her personal development as an individual and as a member of the community.*"

One sentence on the notes for guidance of the tutors on home visits read:-

> "*Emphasise to parents that you are their first point of contact at school on any matter concerning their children.*"

The leaflet "Approximately Twenty Eight Language Activities for Tutor Time" began:-

> "*Tutor time is, and must be, for the tutor and his/her group to come together and grow together, i.e. it is not teaching time.*"

Many tutors held meetings to discuss their group with those who taught them. Working parties of this kind were ad hoc according to need. There were no self-perpetuating groups apart from the agenda sub-committee which had the power to be frank and fearless and fix the tone of weekly staff meetings.

The agenda sub-committee (A.S.C.) had been formed in 1975 to ease Stewart Wilson into some of the details of democracy.[4] A.S.C. had a representative from each department and it decided upon what would be discussed and how long would be allocated to discussion. The chairmanship of the staff meeting would rotate through the whole staff. The topic would be spoken to, groups would form to discuss further and return to vote on action. Major changes required a two-thirds majority vote. At least three times a term the emerging stresses were examined. Reviews of progress, "*battery-charging sessions*", took the form of a one-day Conference on the optional day off - the annual governors' day. Small groups were again preferred to big sessions in order to give more junior members of staff a better chance of speaking.

The end of term events had become uproarious if not outright cathartic. "Cock-Up of the Year" was held immediately after school. Tutors wrote down each other's howlers on scraps of paper which were read out by two staff after the fashion of the "*two Ronnies*". There were team as well as individual entries and a visitor's prize. The award of the grotesque plaster shape was not easily won for there was so much stiff competition. Memorable, for brevity at least, was the drama tutor's remark to the adult, under cloth cap, who was carefully reading a poster with his index finger:-

> "*It's a question of literacy darling*", she said to the Chairman of the Education Committee.

The cabaret later that evening had husbands, wives, all manner of staff and parents laughing at a deputy in drag as Marlene Dietrich, songs and sketches which went on with varying degrees of professionalism for at least an hour. Very few foibles, if any, were missed in the barrage of direct humour.

Cleaners, technicians and anciliaries like the nurse and librarian were regarded as full staff members and freely attended social functions and staff meetings. A technician in technical studies became interested in sailing, then an 11th session sailing instructor and then accompanied school camps to Kircubright. A science technician who transferred to C. & R. to cope with off-set litho. work, regularly instructed pupil-helpers. The nurse rarely appeared in uniform and regularly featured on Health Education matters in the Personal Relationships course. Rather than being separate and lesser mortals the support staff were known by their first names and were gradually incorporated into the teaching. Daily life in the school was both enlarged and enriched. The effect was most noticeable at "*fun events*".

The annual Pancake Race was open to all tutor groups competing in years. Supermarkets, offices and factories sent teams in fancy dress. The Bionic Babies, the ladies from Woolworths, pounded round the town centre with a pancake that was "*not more than ½ cm. thick and had no rubber reinforcements.*" They won the fancy dress but not the race as the Police and the D.H.S.S.'s "Export Models" had obviously been in training. The D.H.S.S. personnel were almost bound to win something as they had entered five teams. The prizes were mugs made at the Day Centre. Adult groups were asked to join in the summer fete and raise money for themselves in the process. Whilst firms and shops gave prizes and donations, groups like Skegby Old People's Home raised money specifically for their holiday excursions.

The Low Street runner . . .

In the Jubilee spirit . . . members of the Sutton Woolworth's team, Pat Willetts, Jennifer Hutchinson and Susan Holmes, get tuition in the art of tossing the pancake from team captain Gillian Cutts prior to the start of the Sutton Pancake Race on Tuesday. — NFP117D/7. Pancake patrol for Kirkby policeman Dick Draper, as he takes first prize in the senior section of the race. — NFP117D/13. The course was from Sutton Health Centre via the Idlewells and Low Street to Sutton Centre.

Sutton Centre - Pancake Race - Notts. Free Press 25.2.77.

There were proofs of other kinds too. A pupil began 'A' level work in his fourth year,[5] music and athletics competitions were invariably won and eighteen parents stood for parent governor. One candidate's self description reads:-

> "*Daughter in her fourth year at Sutton Centre. Now a member of S.C.U.A. Education Committee, Rambling Club, occasional coffee bar helper. Have attended Family German Course, now attending Sociology course. I have spent two holidays with Sutton Centre children.*"

The effects, now thought of as "*evidence*", were felt as far as the governing body.

At the governors' meeting on the 20th June 1977 the Chairman regretted that they had to disband because of the local government elections. He said, "*It's a sad day, we've made great strides. We'll see some great sparks from this school*". A district councillor continued the theme "*No governing body has done things like this one... We've done things that most have not attempted. It's the one meeting that I've enjoyed.*"

Stewart Wilson replied "*We've had the governing body behind us. I hope that you will still look on it as your school whatever happens.*"

Put another way the success of the school in attracting adults and pupils lay in its achievement of a moral order, an order committed to those self-same people. This was an order which teachers could express in their language and Suttonians could translate into theirs.

The Profile cards expressed the Centre's intentions with the utmost brevity. Home Management's first aim was to:-

> "*Encourage pupils to become critical consumers*".

Environmental Studies' aim was to:

> "*study the world and man's place in it, and to encourage in all of us an appreciation of the environment and a sense of responsibility towards it.*"

Communication & Resources

A PROFILE CARD.

We aim to encourage.....

AWARENESS OF THE **SENSES** MAINLY TO DO WITH SIGHT, SOUND, TOUCH.

SUCCESS IN SOME FORM OF **COMMUNICATION** THROUGH THE USE OF VERBAL, VISUAL AND WRITTEN MATERIAL AND THE PRESENTATION OF WORK TO EACH OTHER

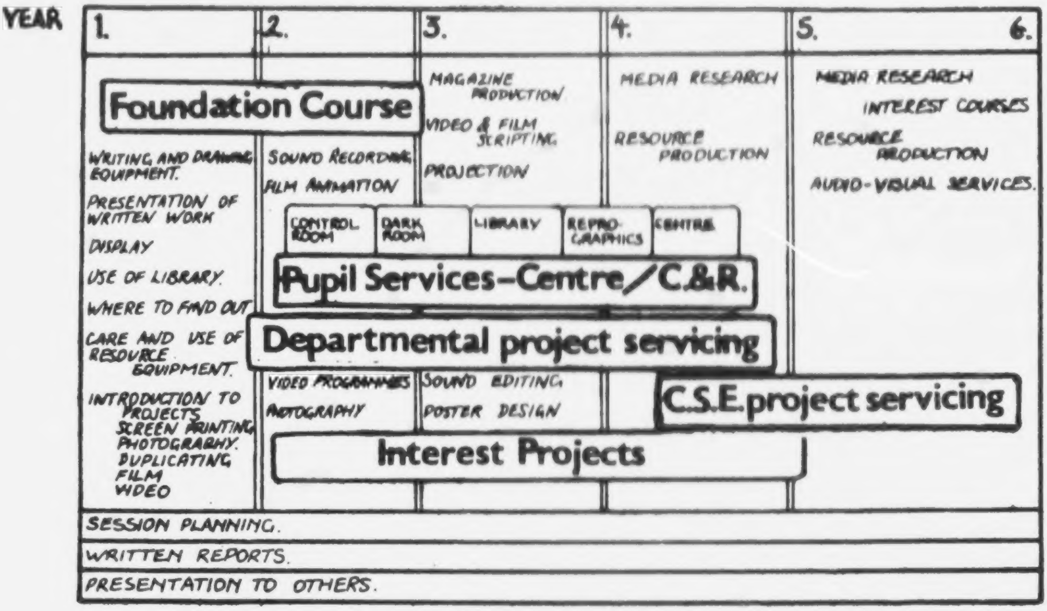
A SENSE OF **RESOURCEFULNESS** THE HOW AND WHERE OF FINDING INFORMATION

SOME UNDERSTANDING OF **MASS MEDIA** OF ADVERTIZING, POP CULTURE, TELEVISION, NEWSPAPERS, ACHIEVED BY MOUNTING ADVERTIZING CAMPAIGNS, PLANNING DISCOS, MAKING TELEVISION PROGRAMMES, PRODUCING MAGAZINES AND THEN EXAMINING THE RESULTS.

INVOLVEMENT IN THE RUNNING OF THE **CENTRE** WITH THE SETTING UP OF PUPIL RUN SERVICES.

SELF MOTIVATION DIRECTION RESPONSIBILITY IN A NON-PRESSURIZED SITUATION.

Contents of the Course


YEAR
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
Foundation Course
WRITING AND DRAWING EQUIPMENT.
PRESENTATION OF WRITTEN WORK
DISPLAY
USE OF LIBRARY.
WHERE TO FIND OUT
CARE AND USE OF RESOURCE EQUIPMENT.
INTRODUCTION TO PROJECTS
SCREEN PRINTING
PHOTOGRAPHY.
DUPLICATING
FILM
VIDEO
SOUND RECORDING
FILM ANIMATION
VIDEO PROGRAMMES
PHOTOGRAPHY
MAGAZINE PRODUCTION
VIDEO & FILM SCRIPTING
PROJECTION
SOUND EDITING
POSTER DESIGN
MEDIA RESEARCH
RESOURCE PRODUCTION
MEDIA RESEARCH
INTEREST COURSES
RESOURCE PRODUCTION
AUDIO-VISUAL SERVICES.
CONTROL ROOM
DARK ROOM
LIBRARY
REPRO-GRAPHICS
CENTRE
Pupil Services–Centre/C.&R.
Departmental project servicing
C.S.E. project servicing
Interest Projects
SESSION PLANNING.
WRITTEN REPORTS.
PRESENTATION TO OTHERS.

Maths — more a way of life

IF YOU see a pupil from Sutton Centre armed with a camera and taking snapshots of a spiral staircase or a waste paper bin in the Idlewells Precinct, don't be misled into thinking he's developed a Lord Snowdon complex and that photography is the latest in the line of new exam subjects. It's just that this particular outing is all part of his maths education.

For waste paper bins and rows of steps, as mathematicians will know, are all to do with shapes — or geometry to give the subject its correct term.

Investigation work like this out of doors session is all part and parcel of a subject which, when I was at school nine years ago, was a boring sequence of algebra, equations and trigonometry, none of which has been the least bit useful since.

It's not that they have disappeared off the syllabus altogether, you understand, just that only the cleverer youngsters are subjected, voluntarily, to the ritual of Pythagorus' theorem, isosceles triangles and indices.

MATTER OF CHOICE

Modern maths still gives a basic grounding in the important aspects of arithmetic, addition, multiplication, fractions, percentages and so on, of course, but from the fourth year onwards it's largely a matter of choice.

Less bright pupils continued learning the basic skills, others concentrate more on ratios, fractions and money, while another group deal with the more involved subjects like geometry, algebra and calculus.

Then, in the fifth year, advanced topics are introduced, geared to what the individual pupil thinks he wants in life.

Perhaps a girl, intends working in a shop. If so she is taught commercial arithmetic along with social arithmetic which shows her things like how to manage a family budget.

Those going on to 'A' level courses continue with their particular mathematical interests.

It is the younger pupils who get the chance of those out-of-school sessions which I mentioned earlier. Let David Purseglove, head of Maths, explain.

"When we were at school, maths was a question and answer lesson. With this topic, there is no answer.

"It puts the youngsters in a situation where they have to look at something and see what they can get out of it. They are told 'go out into Sutton and find maths around you'."

A NEW CONCEPT

Another interesting and relatively new concept is sequence work, making pupils find out for themselves how the rate of reproduction in rabbits and the number of shoots produced by a plant works out in a pattern.

"Some aspects of Maths are sophisticated and some mundane, depending on the individual," said Mr. Purseglove.

This business of individuality is important at Sutton Centre, as I found when I sat in with a class of second year pupils on Tuesday morning.

They were apparently quite happy working at their own speeds, some racing ahead, others lagging behind, but all trying their best to tackle the problems before them.

The progress of each boy and girl is charted on individual diagnostic sheets which gives Mr. Purseglove, deputy head Mr. Bob Mahy, and the other maths teachers the opportunity of knowing at a glance what stage a person has reached.

If he or she is not up to scratch in any section, they are temporarily moved to the basic skills department, where their knowledge is brushed up before they are allowed back into the fold."

At the end of the course, pupils are given one of four certificates which show employers at a glance how their basic arithmetic proficiency has added up.

REALISTIC SITUATIONS

The highest is the intermediate, which shows the child can deal with straightforward sums, convert fractions, decimals and percentages, and measure metric lengths, using their knowledge in realistic situations.

And, in one gesture towards the modern way of life, they have to be able to use an electronic calculator.

But does this new system work? After all, the last generation didn't fare too badly. Or did we?

Bob Mahy is convinced they are working on the right lines. "I am thrilled with this system," he said.

"Before, I have felt, when teaching from the blackboard, that I have only told half the class, then had to go round and explain to the other half.

"With one fourth year boy already preparing for an 'A' level course and a girl practically ready, I am sure this is an advantage over the old system where they would have been held back by their less gifted classmates."

Schools are 'not complacent'

IN the wake of Prime Minister Jim Callaghan's attack on education standards, Sutton Centre's progressive head Mr. Stewart Wilson stressed this week that it was not the present generation of young people and their schools that were to blame for the country's current ills.

It was the people who left school ten, 20 and 30 years or more ago who were responsible for the political and industrial management — or mismanagement — of the country.

"Perhaps it was the educational system they went through which has left this country so ill-equipped to cope with its economic problems," Mr. Wilson said.

"What we need today is to educate young people to cope with a rapidly changing world which means an emphasis on science and technology, and turning out young people with inquiring and critical minds who are not going to be satisfied with the way this country has muddled through in the past, as well as giving them the basic skills," he added.

He agreed with Mr. Callaghan that the main aims of the education service were to get pupils to master basic skills by the time they left school, to equip them for a role in industry, to help along their personal development and to seek more parental involvement in education.

"I have every confidence that our schools are tackling their job seriously and with a great deal of dedication, but we are not complacent and will welcome a much closer dialogue with industry regarding their own special needs," he offered.

"*Getting something out of school*" developed, therefore, into the right to be critical and creative. The ideal was that pupils were to grow to be sexually mature not sexist and immature. The children were not being educated in order to be productive, they were being productive. Productiveness was regarded as an attitude of mind upon which the quantity and quality of output depended. The pupil was presented as imaginative, trustworthy and responsible, a person to be encouraged into a competant cooperation with others. No pupil was said to be automatically interested largely in sex-based pursuits or lazy; limited; dishonest and only stimulated by competition. Pupils were said to have potentials rather than be bundles of problems. Equal value was given to expressivity (thinking), instrumentalism (doing) and involvement (power_sharing). Sutton Centre's ideal was that because of power-sharing both thinking and doing would flourish.

The ideals above are largely expressed in the teachers' own words. Pupils and adults who joined the "*community within*" responded practically. A man regularly in the Reprographics department to do publicity for his Club was asked by a visitor how he felt about the Centre's commitment to community education:-

> "*I've had some use out of it*", he said.

A fifth former helping in the P.H.A.B. club said,

> "*It saves you money on a Friday night*".

The Chairman of the School Council said,

> "*I'm not a guinea pig. I'm working hard to get to Oxford.*"

A mother in class said:

> "*I work part-time but manage to fit in one evening at the centre and with luck I might even make it two. Occasionally I go in on a Tuesday morning to do some extra learning but I hasten to add that the teacher does not let my presence interfere with the children's education.*"

When asked if he thought the Centre was too lavish a man replied:-

> "*After all this place is an educationally deprived area. So all these things they've put here should be free or nearly so. We've had nothing for so long.*"

Sutton Centre's participants were busy making their own daily increments of proof in a matter of fact way.

The academic year 1977/78 was to open with principles and proofs occurring side by side like close parallel lines. All 1977's fifth years had been with the same tutors since they began. Stewart Wilson's message in October 1977 included the following items:

> *"11th Sessions.*
>
> *Our evening 11th sessions are again proving extremely popular with our pupils and with quite a number of pupils from our feeder Primary Schools. Some pupils come back to the Centre five nights a week for various activities.*
>
> *Visitors to the Centre never cease to be amazed at seeing 40 to 50 youngsters working away at their Maths or Science every evening and the Centre library is so popular with pupils doing follow-up work that we may sadly have to start having a rota system for library use. Can we remind all parents that you are welcome to come along to 11th session activities with your children and to join in if you wish. There are, incidentally, vacancies for adults in several of our Family classes and in our 'A' level classes in Mathematics, Literature, History, Environmental Science, Physics, Art and Economics."*
>
> *"Our school attendance for the half-term has been good - averaging out at 92.7%. In fact many tutor groups regularly average over 95% and we have a large number of pupils who have set their sights on being members of the 'One Hundred Percenters' Club at the end of the year."*
>
> *"The Save Our Schools Campaign.*
>
> *The Director of Education has recently launched a County-wide appeal entitled 'Save our Schools' - (S.O.S. for short) in an effort to halt the damage caused to many of our schools by vandalism and fire...The Director of Education also recently publicly commended Sutton Centre for having the lowest rate of vandalism of any secondary school in the county."*

Reflecting on this evidence and upon what he saw during his frequent tours through the Centre Stewart Wilson wrote:

> *"Perhaps most fundamentally of all, we are starting to persuade and convince the wider public that a school is their building as well as their children's building and that they have the right of access and a right to the vast range of facilities and interests which a school, through its buildings and staff, can provide."*

S.C.U.A. IS SIX MONTHS OLD

After only 6 months, the Sutton Centre Users Association is making its mark. 100 new members were recruited at the July fete and each week one or two more applications are received. It is only 10p to join and this small token fee will be put to good use to help finance fund raising events for the Centre. Contact Mrs. M. J. Thomas or Mrs. B. Smith at the Centre if you wish to join.

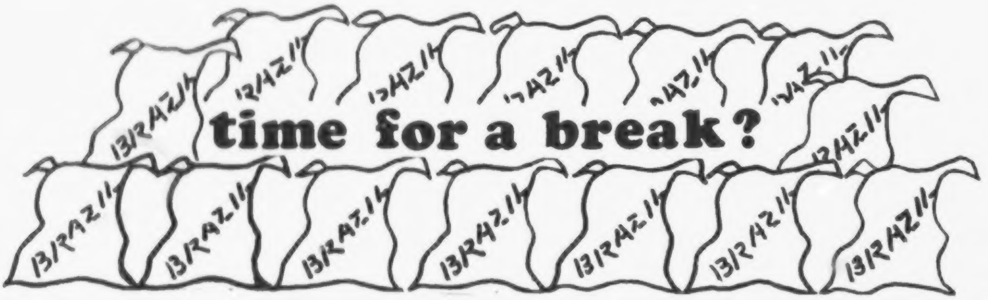
The Committee was approached by numerous people to launch a petition to try to get the Sports Centre Open. More than 2,000 people signed in just a fortnight, many of them making a special journey into the Centre to do so. This petition is to be presented to David Marquand, the Ashfields M.P.

The Association now has a crest. Free Press readers were invited to submit original designs. There were a lot of very good entries, but everyone was unanimous in declaring David Green's symbolic "circle of friends arounds the Centre" as the winner - so watch out for this sign. David is a University Student who lives at Skegby. Paul Gower of 24, Quarrydale Road, Susan Bostock of 41, Langford Street, Royston Eaton of 46, Carsic Lane and Helen Cornwall of 33, Searby Road were runners up.

S.C.U.A. is to have its own 'corner' in the Centre, where members can meet, chat and get up-to-date on Centre events. All the latest classes and activities will be on display.

Don't forget the Barn Dance on 6th November - St. Mary's Church Hall - 8.00 p.m. onwards - S.C.U.A. will be running the Tombola. If you can donate a small prize (there will be big ones too!) please send or bring it to the Centre before 2nd November.

If you use or want to use Sutton Centre join S.C.U.A. and by attending the A.G.M. and voting for the Committee of your choice you can have a say in how it should be run. Approach S.C.U.A. Committee members at any time if you have any ideas or queries. S.C.U.A. is here to voice YOUR opinions to the Management.



Brazil made us the coffee. We've jaffa juice from the east. What we need now are mums, dads, grandmas, grandads, aunts or uncles to help us drink it.

Have you three quarters of an hour to spare any morning from 10.15 a.m. to 11.00 a.m. or afternoon from 2.15 p.m. to 3.00 p.m.? Come and make our break and have one yourself. Please contact Betty Smith at the Centre - Mansfield 52171.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: WELCOME ABOARD.

> *"By making it clear that error was expected, correction was considered commonplace and those corrected did not feel threatened. Finding a new mistake became the thing to do".*
>
> *Aaron Wildarsky on his Graduate School.*

Between 1974 and 1976 other *'parts'* of Sutton Centre opened. The arrivals included relatively large units like the Day Centre for the Handicapped and Elderly, area offices like the Careers Service and organisers of services like Local Authority Adult Education. All manner of questions were raised by the arrival of each addition. How suitable was their accommodation? How did they interpret their purpose and would they be compatible with the school's style and the Centre's location? Were those appointed or transferred in sympathy with the Feasibility Study's aims?

This chapter argues that the school reached out to the other parts. The school welcomed the newcomers aboard; its approach was consistent with their needs. Secondly, and as a result, norms and mechanisms were created by the senior staff which went beyond those suggested by the Feasibility Study. Successful initiatives and cooperative ventures brought to the surface the possibility of more formal arrangements. The atmosphere of high hopes which characterises the period depended upon the outward-going generosity of the school (the school's explicit support for smaller services) and the consolidation of working relationships by customs and committees. 1974 to 1977 was a period of mutual discovery and mutual support.

According to the plans, the Day Centre, Adult Education and the Youth Service had been given a share in the *'school's spaces'*. The School, being in first, had spread right to the edges of their own exclusive areas. Its teaching style promoted this spread. Only if the school unambiguously gave way would they succeed in serving the community as fully as they should. The school proved to be willing to give more than space; it was in approach and reinforcement that the school made the most appreciable contribution. For the school was committed to *'adults', 'all walks of life'* and *'integration'*; its culture created a climate in which the minor parts could flourish. Its staff and pupils extended themselves into contact and regular participation.

To come to the point, it could have been the case that both Adult Education and the Youth Service arrived with distrust and a determination to keep a healthy distance.

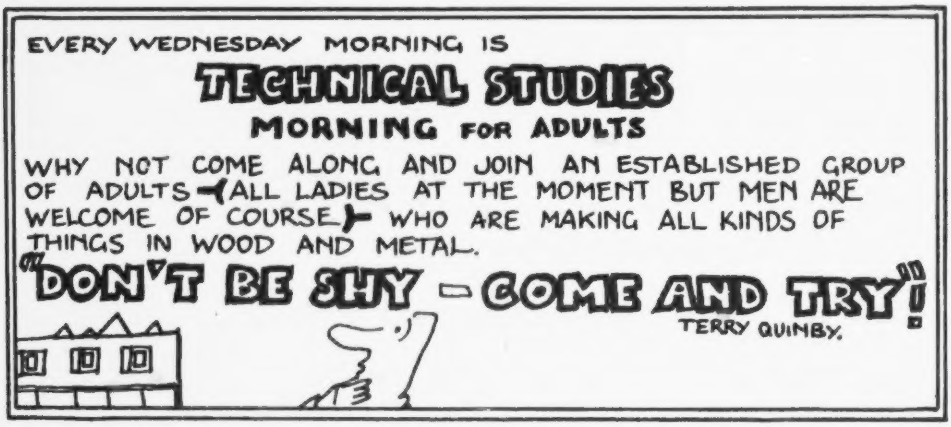
Bunker Pool

Stewart Wilson knew of this attitude and respected the reasons for it. He sought to have both services responsible to him so that the challenges could be squarely met. He succeeded in having the youth worker's post graded as scale 4 and so on equal status with the school's course directors. It was the only youth worker's position in the County to be so regarded. But adult education was going to be reorganised and so the Principal of the Evening Institute arrived without any provision for direct contact. Furthermore, the school and adult education looked as if they were going to be in direct competition: 11th sessions versus Night School. Even so conflict over customers did not occur either with the Youth Service or with Adult Education.

The reasons for "*fitting-in*" are many. First, whilst the school's catchment area was fixed both services were organised for more of the town. The people appointed were organisers for the area at large, the Centre was the centre of their operations but was not their major concern. Secondly, tutors became part-time staff for Adult Education and the Youth Service. Thirdly, the services were mostly provided during out-of-school hours. A kind of tidal principle was applied. At school dinner times the Youth Service Coffee bar was popular with pupils and twice a week at dinner times hosted a disco which was staffed voluntarily by teachers and whose proceeds went to school funds. In the evening and weekends a school coffee bar area outside the youth worker's office housed more formal meetings. The Technical Studies area was used to make and repair furniture and equipment. The Teachers' Centre was used for a weekly part-time workers' course and C. and R. helped with advertisements and graphics.

YOUTH AND COMMUNITY

We are **JOHN, FIONA AND ROGER**: at the moment doing our three musketeer bit around the Centre. We hope to open the coffee bar (christened "The Bunker") early in the new year when all the delays in repairs and alterations have been overcome ??.. Our room (temporary) is through the Communication & Resources department on the way to the canteen and we sit eagerly waiting for people to bombard us with ideas (concerned with making use of the youth facilities in the Centre):if they manage to find us and not the toilet next door.



EVERY WEDNESDAY MORNING IS

TECHNICAL STUDIES

MORNING FOR ADULTS

WHY NOT COME ALONG AND JOIN AN ESTABLISHED GROUP OF ADULTS -(ALL LADIES AT THE MOMENT BUT MEN ARE WELCOME OF COURSE)- WHO ARE MAKING ALL KINDS OF THINGS IN WOOD AND METAL.

"DON'T BE SHY - COME AND TRY"!

TERRY QUINBY.

Communication and Resources' support was vital. If the Centre was to be a hub then C. & R. was to become the axle upon which it turned. The incoming smaller "*parts*" could immediately make photocopies, print stencils and develop the quality of their media by using off-set litho. printing. They used the Bulletin to communicate with each other and "Centre News" to speak to the outside world. There were video cameras and video recording machines; an I.B.M. typewriter; projectors and cassette recorders. There was no need to apply to a store many miles away; equipment was freely on loan. This access to resources was made evident by C. & R. but was not limited to that particular school department. The W.E.A.'s Geology class borrowed binocular microscopes from the Science Department and the school's typewriters were used to start an experimental evening class in secretarial skills.

C. & R. went further than other school departments because it took the initiative. It had produced a message style which invited or instructed but did not forbid. Murals were made for the newcomers as they arrived. The secretaries and clerks took the opportunity to exchange resources, cover each others' holidays by taking messages and learn how to improve the presentation of their service's materials. Cooperation between the *"bosses"* meant that cooperation between the workers was open and unrestricted. Instead of there being a separate photocopier in every office there was more space and less capital expenditure. C. & R. produced a proposal for a fully fledged reprographics unit which was accepted and agreed to in principle by all the minor functions. The question was how was it to be financed? The need far exceeded the means of shared financing which were available. The potential of the building as a cooperative venture between services could only be realised if the Centre as a whole had a budget. The best Centre staff could do was to pool petty cash. In time, the pooling of small sums led to the organisation of meetings which brought all heads together. Connections were agreed to on an ad-hoc basis and financed by what might be called *"the petty cash principle"*. Each part took small sums of money, some through catering and mostly by fund-raising. Petty cash was not sent up to the respective head office but kept safely somewhere with a petty cash book. Whip-rounds having become a way of life the way was paved for all heads * to meet each other more formally. Stewart Wilson initiated a weekly meeting of what was called the Centre Coordinating Committee.[1] Symbolic priority was given to the meeting by it being held *"first thing on Monday morning"*. Each head of each part was invited as was the head caretaker. Stewart Wilson was the sole representative of the school and the chairmanship rotated monthly. To begin with Stewart Wilson's secretary took minutes and circulated them in advance of meetings.

UCATIO
HELPS YOU

A format for the meetings soon emerged. Each week there were problems; flashpoints of conflict in fact. The drama society had been locked in the maths. lecture theatre, for example, or the slip-road to the Day Centre had been dangerously blocked.

**the term head refers to the top position in each part; Day Centre Manager and Evening Institute Principal for example.*

Or the building was freezing during a teachers' evening meeting and a courting couple had been found entwined in the Music Block.

Most 'problems' referred to the same tensions although they became apparent in different ways. The principle of priority time worked reasonably well but planning had to allow for spontaneous use. Just because, for example, the Teachers' Centre was not intensively used during term time it was not correct to schedule a regular *'ordinary'* school function within its spaces. Agreement had to be reached beforehand - barring emergencies. It was, however, accepted that people often looked for a vacant space and quickly occupied the first one they found. Optimising use this way made caretaking difficult and so part of the meeting was given over to issuing advanced warnings. Notice of forthcoming events also helped heads to decide if they could have a part in what was planned too.

There was no correspondence to or from the Committee but such correspondence as each head received was circulated. Information pooled in this way was significant because different heads got to know different things. The school and the Day Centre were the major sources because they were responsible to separate and powerful County Council committees. One good reason for *'minor function'* heads to attend was to find out what was happening. Another good reason was to balance the tidal wave effect of the school-term against their quieter and more continuous presence.

Car parking was just such an issue. County policy believed to be one space for every four teachers. But at Sutton Centre there was no yard conveniently close for an overspill. In addition there were town centre shoppers with a sharp eye and charges to be paid elsewhere. Some Centre Coordinating Committee members thought that they should have reserved spaces and even went so far as to talk about barriers and passes. Others agreed that as a Community Education Centre the public should have free parking at all times. The Maths department made a survey of spaces and users which showed that the car park was almost always full to capacity. At weekends and in the evening the car park became a popular public facility whatever the driver's destination. The list of staff cars proved useful when car lights had been left on or the Health Centre's doctors had been offended yet again. The Centre Coordinating Committee voted not to have a closed car park at any price. The University Extra Mural Tutor said the car park should be *"free, full and wholly in accord with our purposes"*. The point of this vote is one thing and the provision for it is another. The Centre Coordinating Committee embodied the principle of one part one vote. Power was not distributed according to size but equally, no matter how large or small the part might be. The meeting did not actually have the power to do anything directly, although going against the expressed wish of others would obviously have repercussions. Territoriality and the insistence on protocol became mechanisms each part could use when collective wishes were blatantly ignored. The desirability of cooperation rested upon the good sense it made. There was considerable lack of knowledge, at first, though over each Service's aims and therefore where precisely cooperation could easily and fruitfully occur.

Towards the end of each meeting one head gave a ten minute talk on the background of their Service and what they wanted to achieve in the near future. These talks were often printed as notes in advance (see Appendix 13). Both talks and notes lead to some detailed exchanges which were then minuted (see Appendix 14).

There were two major areas of common ground which forced detailed discussions of philosophy. The first was how the Centre was to run out of school priority time. The second was how to campaign to have the Centre completed, open and fully operational. Discussions on the fire drill illustrate the first point.

Two fire drills were held each term on school day mornings. Some members objected to there being two a term. The Youth Worker was having to force members out of the coffee bar as the events had become so predictable. But why were there no drills in the evening or at weekends others wondered. Furthermore there were few directional signs inside the building and none outside.

The second point, the finishing touches needed and the frustration which outstanding work caused-leads to the observation that the coordinating committee members were collectively acting as a Centre Manager or Administrator. At their meeting on March 7th 1977 nine heads drew up an agenda for their meeting with the Deputy County Council Clerk and Deputy Director of Education scheduled for the following week. They agreed to pursue the following matters:

1. The date of completion of unfinished and outstanding work:-

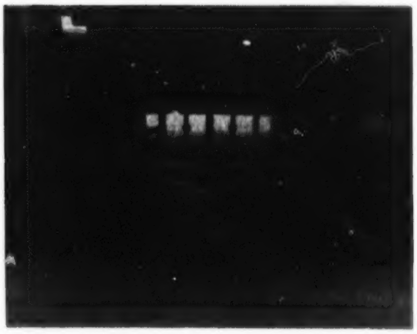
(a) Foyer.

(b) Dining Area and Cafeteria

(c) Crèche

(d) Planted/Water Areas.

(e) Sign-posting.



The Unfurnished Foyer Stairs

2. Telephones

(a) Separate booking line for Recreation.

(b) Switchboard manning during school holidays.

3. Staffing Issues

(a) Centre caretaking, maintenance, security and the position of Assistant Caretakers, Service Operatives and Boilermen.

(b) Centre Graphics Designer.

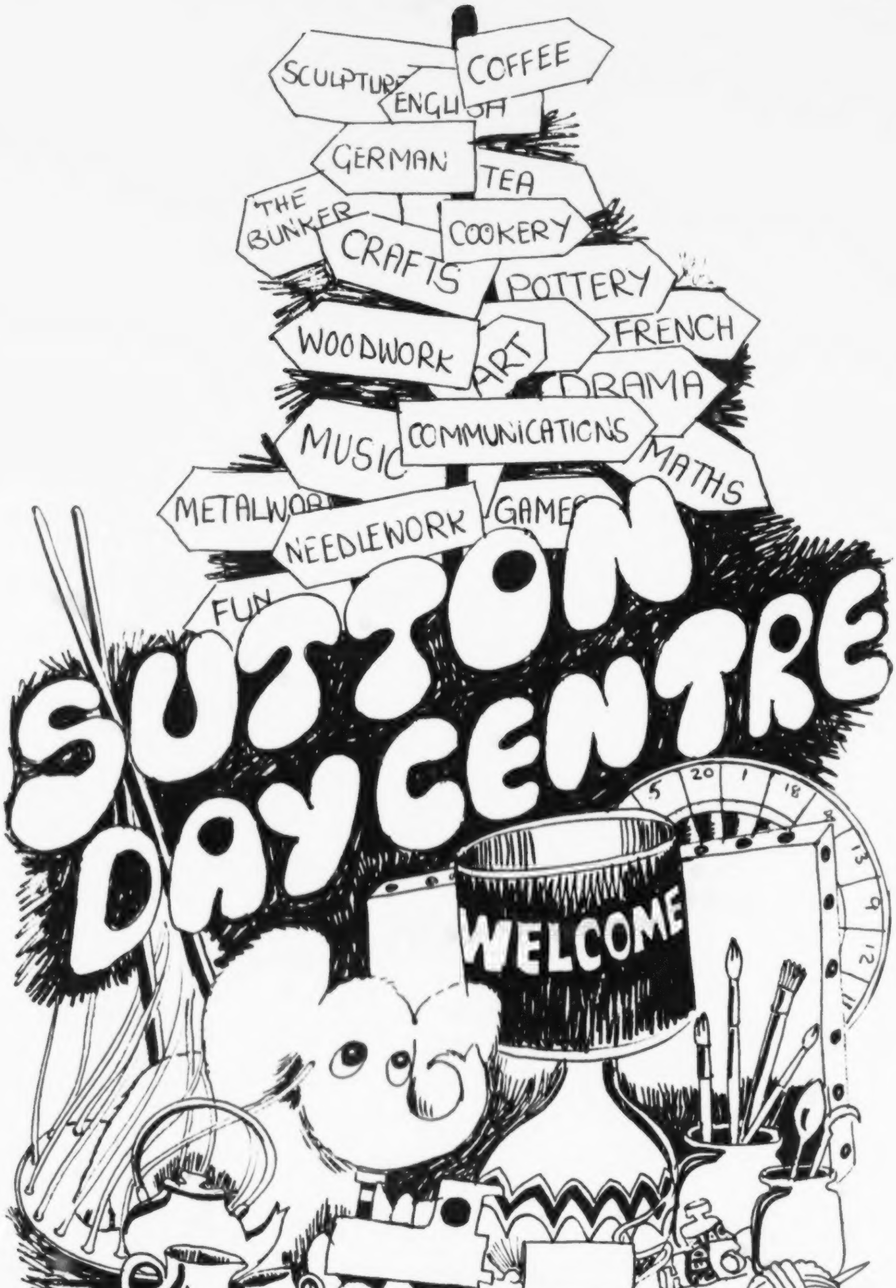
4. Handicapped

The use of all facilities and parts of the Centre

5. Virement Monies

The allocation and use of a Centre Budget for maintenance and minor works.

Thus, whatever their differences, the heads could get together and raise questions about the Centre as a whole. Their arguments, too, had proved sufficiently accurate and persuasive to draw senior County Officials to their meeting on an agenda which they, themselves, had set.


SCULPTURE
COFFEE
ENGLISH
GERMAN
TEA
THE BUNKER
COOKERY
CRAFTS
POTTERY
FRENCH
WOODWORK
ART
DRAMA
MUSIC
COMMUNICATIONS
MATHS
METALWORK
NEEDLEWORK
GAMES
FUN
SUTTON DAY CENTRE
WELCOME
5
20
1
18
13
9
12
11

The staff and pupils of Sutton Centre extend a hearty welcome to members of the Day Centre.

Jean Garner (Day Centre Organiser) reports that even though the centre has only been opened a few weeks everyone seems to be settling down very well in their new surroundings and appreciating the help and kindness of everyone - especially the pupils whose help is proving invaluable in many ways.

There were many other items on the agenda of the week by week meetings. Staff get-togethers, "*at homes*", combined paper purchase and the formation of a Staff Association were recurring topics during 1976-77. By general agreement flare-ups between two parts were ruled out of court and referred back to the parties concerned. Attendance varied according to the agenda and deputies from each part were either added or came as substitutes. By the winter of 1976, then, Sutton Centre had two groupings which were unforeseen by the Feasibility Study and yet were furthering its aims more than any individual head could do. These bodies were the Sutton Centre Users' Association and the Sutton Centre Coordinating Committee. Neither had formal recognition nor did they have clear links either with each other or with the off-site paymasters. Both began to correspond directly with the County and District Chief Executives. There was still no Centre Council to whom they could refer.

Obvious links between the two groups on site were made through Stewart Wilson's membership and support for the Coordinating Committee and his Deputy Head, Maureen Thomas's secretaryship of the Users' Association.

Crest winner

Notts. Free Press
15.10.76.

UNIVERSITY student David Green has won the Sutton Centre Users' Association's contest to design a crest for the organisation.

In a simple black and white outline, his design symbolises a circle of friends around the centre.

Allowing for holidays, it took the association several months to select David's entry from the many designs submitted.

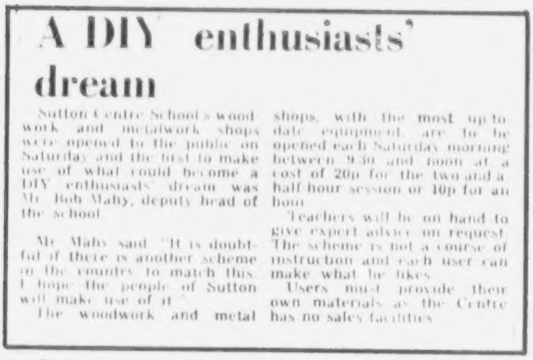
He received a book token at a presentation in the school's teachers' centre on Thursday, and the four runners-up, Paul Gower, of 24 Quarrydale Road, Susan Bostock, of 41 Langford Street, Royston Eaton, of 46 Carsic Lane, and Helen Cornwall, of 33 Searby Road, all Sutton, each received gift vouchers.

The youngsters came from Sutton Centre, Eastbourne and Quarrydale Schools.

● Presentation time on Thursday for David as he received his book token prize from Mrs. Maureen Thomas. — NFP 683C/3

These links were strengthened by the common concern to encourage volunteers. By 1977 the School, Day Centre, Youth Service and Adult Literacy had been developed by volunteers and now depended upon their volunteers to keep these developments going. If the volunteers were counted as staff they numbered 29% of the Centre's staff totals. (see Appendix 15). Even then the total for the school only included coffee bar helpers whilst, in fact, there were adult/helper/teacher/learners who had become attached to almost every school department.

As far as the front-line workers in the various parts were concerned the Committee was a rather distant "*good thing*". The effect was that their superiors were cooperating but only periodically touched upon matters which directly affected their day-to-day work. That the most powerful people in the place were on speaking terms and more, made for less tension generally, and in particular heads' commitment to the Committee reduced that tension which occurs when subordinates cooperate whilst their superiors do not. The agreed goal appeared to be that of filling the Centre as much and as often as possible.



A DIY enthusiasts' dream

Sutton Centre School's woodwork and metalwork shops were opened to the public on Saturday and the first to make use of what could become a DIY enthusiasts' dream was Mr Bob Mahy, deputy head of the school.

Mr Mahy said "It is doubtful if there is another scheme in the country to match this. I hope the people of Sutton will make use of it."

The woodwork and metal shops, with the most up-to-date equipment, are to be opened each Saturday morning between 9.30 and noon at a cost of 20p for the two and a half hour session or 10p for an hour.

Teachers will be on hand to give expert advice on request. The scheme is not a course of instruction and each user can make what he likes.

Users must provide their own materials as the Centre has no sales facilities.

Chronicle Advertiser 18.9.75

The most noticeable effect of intensifying usage was the rare and slight incidence of vandalism. This observation was more than a compliment to the school. It suggested that the school complimented the Centre. With 900 pupils and 57 full-time staff the school actually felt about the right size in relation to other parts. It was big enough to be the major contributor and small enough for its own exotic culture to reach each and every member.

The significance of the school's competance in maintaining its own order was duly noted by parts which had yet to arrive. The administration block for the offices of Social Services, Probation, Recreation and the Registrar were under construction. Probation Officers were still to be found in the draughty rooms above a butcher's shop in Outram Street. Despite any resentment over promises and delay which they may have felt, one of their number independently reached a rather startling conclusion. His confidential report considered the evidence on the town's juvenile statistics rates and concluded that Probation had some very good reasons to welcome Sutton Centre School. The introduction began;

> "*I am writing this partly to share information about the liaison schemes that exist between the Probation Service and the two secondary schools in Sutton in Ashfield.*
>
> *More fundamentally perhaps, I want to pose the question:-*
>
> > *'Why is offending vastly more numerous and 'heavy' in one school rather than the other?'*
>
> *Oaktree has almost four times as many offences as Sutton Centre. The situation that exists is odd because the two schools are roughly the same size and appear to serve roughly similar catchment areas. It is even more odd, when one considers that Sutton Centre has an equally criminal intake as has Oaktree, as defined by primary school crime rates.*"

The body of the report deals with the details of juvenile crime, the schools' approaches and their different liaison schemes. A close analysis of the statistics reveals that there are two age groups involved; the 11 to 13 year old experimenters who steal from shops, usually on their own and are taken by surprise when they are caught. The older 14 to 16 year old group tend to be more deliberate, organised and intent upon some significant gain. Both schools had '*experimenters*' in almost equal numbers. Sutton Centre did not have the more experienced, older juveniles except in rare instances. Case-studies followed the bare facts. The case-studies illuminated the way in which the liaison schemes operated (see Appendix 16). Sutton Centre's approach was steadily contrasted with what the Probation Officer called the rebellion/retribution/retaliation dynamic of the other school.

The report concluded:-

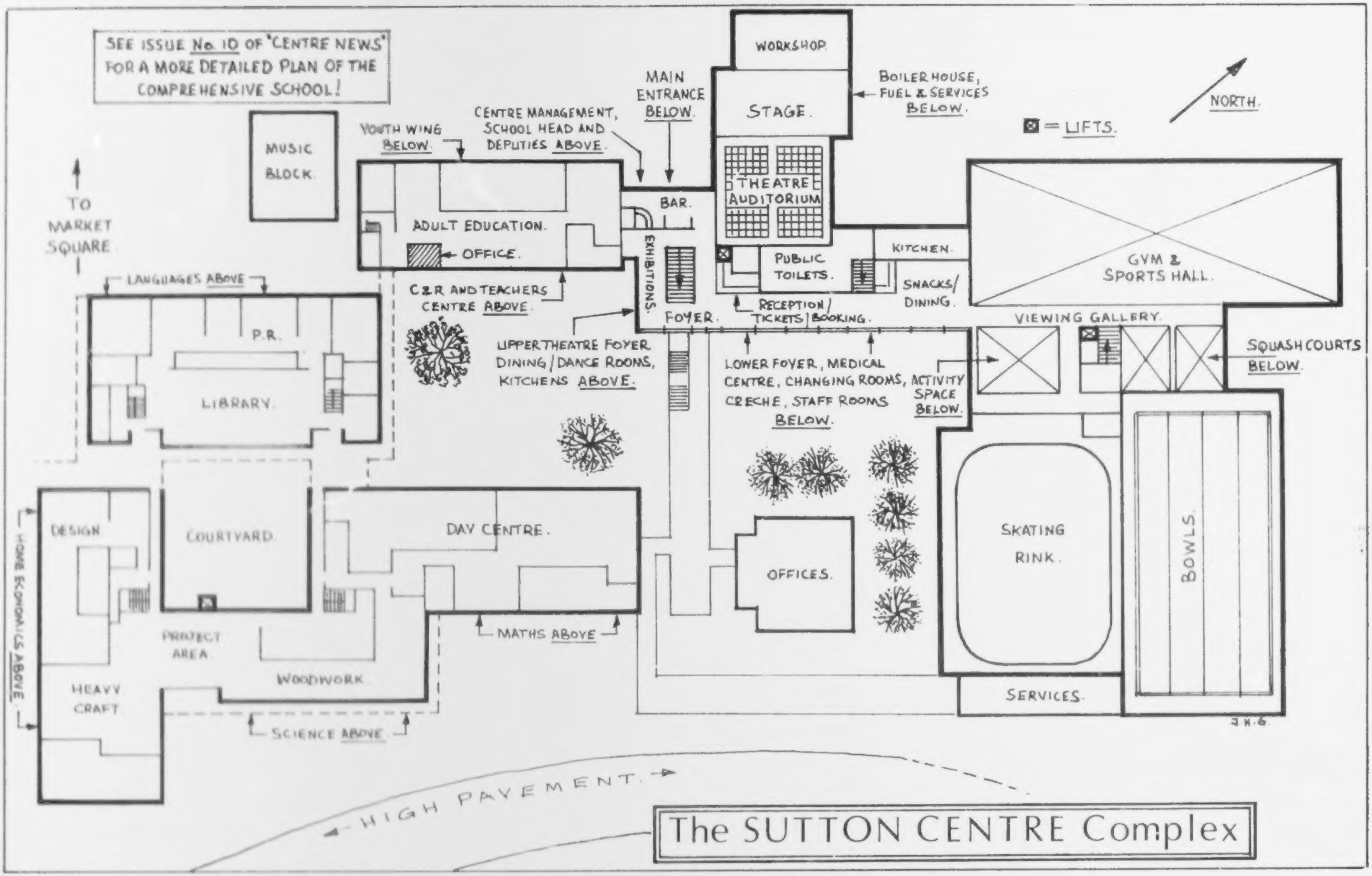
> "*I feel the discrepancy between the offending rate and type at Oaktree and Sutton Centre is so extreme as to be worth further study.*
>
> *My own feeling is that it is possible in part due to differences in the structuring of the schools, the way the delinquent pupils are treated, the values and methods of study and the relationships with the caring agencies.*
>
> *It might not be this however. There are other factors such as differences in the delinquency levels of different communities and in leisure provision. In the preceding paper I have doubted if there is much validity in this explanation, especially as the criminality of the intake from feeder primaries and the social-problem-profiles of catchment areas seem to be in balance.*

......

> *The present situation does seem to raise fairly fundamental social work and educational issues. It may also be that some children's lives will not be as happy or successful as they might, because the situation has so far gone almost unrealised, unstudied and unsolved."*

Tutors at Sutton Centre were rather taken by surprise. They had not set out to reduce crime. On the contrary they had accepted a large number of "*difficult pupils*" who might, in fact, be more inclined to crime than the majority of their peers. It was encouraging to have "*proof*" in this way but their work involved improving the process in relation to all of its consequences rather than a single negative product. What mattered was that a part due to arrive was actively seeking closer relationships. The Probation Service was actually looking forward to being on site and taking cooperation further.

1976.


SEE ISSUE No. 10 OF 'CENTRE NEWS' FOR A MORE DETAILED PLAN OF THE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL!
MUSIC BLOCK.
TO MARKET SQUARE
YOUTH WING BELOW.
CENTRE MANAGEMENT, SCHOOL HEAD AND DEPUTIES ABOVE.
MAIN ENTRANCE BELOW.
WORKSHOP.
STAGE.
BOILER HOUSE, FUEL & SERVICES BELOW.
NORTH.
= LIFTS.
THEATRE AUDITORIUM
BAR.
ADULT EDUCATION.
OFFICE.
EXHIBITIONS.
PUBLIC TOILETS.
KITCHEN.
GYM & SPORTS HALL.
SNACKS/ DINING.
C&R AND TEACHERS CENTRE ABOVE.
FOYER.
RECEPTION/ TICKETS/BOOKING.
VIEWING GALLERY.
LANGUAGES ABOVE
P.R.
LIBRARY.
UPPER THEATRE FOYER DINING/DANCE ROOMS, KITCHENS ABOVE.
LOWER FOYER, MEDICAL CENTRE, CHANGING ROOMS, CRECHE, STAFF ROOMS BELOW.
ACTIVITY SPACE BELOW.
SQUASH COURTS BELOW.
DESIGN
COURTYARD
DAY CENTRE.
OFFICES.
SKATING RINK.
BOWLS.
HOME ECONOMICS ABOVE
PROJECT AREA.
WOODWORK.
MATHS ABOVE
HEAVY CRAFT
SCIENCE ABOVE
SERVICES.
J.H.G.
HIGH PAVEMENT.
The SUTTON CENTRE Complex

A PLAN OF THE CENTRE DRAWN BY A PARENT FOR CENTRE NEWS

CHAPTER TWELVE: THE CONTRASTING STYLES OF CARE.

Each of the new arrivals developed their own distinctive styles. They had their own clients in their own spaces. Each part had its own "*boss*" who was independent of the school and accountable only to a major County Council department through whatever means it organised its functions. Each of the new arrivals had the freedom which is given only to founders in a new venture. They could emphasise traditions or break with them. They could voluntarily co-operate with each other and the school or they could regard their territories as space to be defended. Regardless of the way in which they chose to carry out their work they all had to establish an attitude towards their clients and an atmosphere in which they expressed their contact with townspeople. Thus even if the phasing meant that each "*boss*" had to sort out practical matters for him or herself it also meant the opportunity to create their own image. No matter what moral persuasion the headmaster might attempt and regardless of the support given by school tutors and pupils,each "*boss*" was their own boss on site.

It soon became clear that the interpretations of "*client*", of "*catchment area*" and "*serving the community*" could lead to conflict. Such conflicts of style, however, could be easily contained if the services retreated into their own spaces and concentrated solely upon "*what we do in here*". From this position a service could disagree with the style of another and co-operate from time to time. There were no firm battle lines not least because so many permutations of agreement and disagreement were possible. In brief, each service developed a distinctive style through its interpretation of what was appropriate to their clients, made adjustments through alliances with other services and made as much or as little as they wished of being in the Centre and alongside its progressive school. To outsiders the arrangement was unmanageable. To insiders, and service bosses in particular, there was freedom from interference and optional co-operation on the one hand, whilst on the other hand there was no referee for unfair criticism or hostile action. On balance the various bosses preferred being able to get on with "*their own thing*". Between 1975 and 1977 only occasional voices were raised in favour of either a "*supremo director*" or of a "*Centre Council*". For the time being the economic climate was still favourable to "*going it alone*" and taking risks. Furthermore the status of each boss was both significant in itself and enhanced by being able to refer to the brand new Sutton Centre. The County Council, to whom most were ultimately responsible, was largely preoccupied with the logistics of its overall re-organisation. There was no desire at County Hall to rationalise the accountability of Sutton Centre bosses.

The term "*boss*" is rather unfortunate perhaps (although it does appear on the mug made by a pottery instructor for the Day Centre Manager!). Each service had its own title for the most senior position on site; the youth and community leader; the adult education principal; the university extra-mural resident tutor, the area careers' service officer and so on. Each title, in fact, carried implications for differences in style. However the theme of this chapter is not an analysis based upon abstract comparisons but an account of coexistence. The account begins with the self-determination of each service and leads to an understanding of how some centre-wide issues might be resolved either by co-operation or by compromise or remain a chronic conflict. In the final analysis, then, each service could withdraw from all but chance contact and simply benefit from the common maintenance provided. Each service boss recognised that at base there was the economic sense of sharing a building and the geographical sense of being in the middle of Sutton. The progress towards the higher-order sense of serving the town through common purpose and action was uneven. But then again each service might well have been less effective if they had not confronted a critical dialogue during the same period.

The differences in style become more apparent when the services are described individually. The order of appearance has been set by beginning with those close to the Feasibility Study's aims. The Youth Service and the Teachers' Centre share first place in this respect. The Youth Service had only just been re-organised out of "*Education*" and into a division of "*Leisure Services*". The leader recruited sought all kinds of participation with the school and other parts. He stretched imagination and organisation as much as he could. Before long, the leader, John Clayton, moved alongside Stewart Wilson as a major force for innovation and co-operation.

The Bunker.

The Bunker is a coffee bar and disco on the ground floor facing the market place. This is unusual because *"youth wings"* are usually put round the back near the Boiler House. At Sutton Centre the Bunker had the best position in the whole building A sign of one foot lettering above the door just appeared one day. It was John Clayton's idea to call the club *"the Bunker"*. He said it was because the space it occupied was carved out of the rock. But a Bunker is a wartime defensive dugout too. In John Clayton's opinion:

> *"A youth club is one alternative to being lonely or having to put up with parents or boredom or the cold"*.

The Bunker had different areas and contrasting moods throughout the week. To the left of the door was a Burger Bar used during the day by the public, pupils and other young people alike. Three friendly women cooked the burgers and let those they trusted serve customers too. On Saturdays, linen cloths were put over the tables to attract market-goers. During the day people came and went quickly, sometimes staff 'phoned an order beforehand and only stopped to collect it. Food and drinks were nourishing and good value. Trade was brisk from 11.30a.m. to 1.30p.m.

To the right of the door were the pool table, the pinball machines and the television high on the wall. Young people could be in this area for nothing. It was their area and no member of the public ever went there. Beyond was the windowless disco, a tiled floor and with a sunken floor beneath the DJ's booth for dancing. It looked as though it was intended to be bomb proof from the inside. With the lighting full on you could just see some gory murals. Alongside the store beyond rose the stairs up to the school coffee bar and leader's office. The disco could be shut off from either the school or the club. School dinner time discos had a few club members "*sneaking in*". Tutor group

THE BUNKER LADIES

Disco Wall - With Murals

parties, particularly those at Christmas, were more secure as parents came to lay out food on the tables.[1]

Club members in the evening ranged throughout the Bunker. The tone varied from quiet nights of 25 or so playing pool (with both boys and girls on the table) to disco nights with 60 to 80 'in'; their own DJs having to keep the peace between rockabilly, the latest hits and heavy metal. The two part-time leaders usually kept to the Burger Bar end with one serving and the other circulating. Members watched full length films most weeks; made up pool teams and disco rotas; repaired furniture and the pool felt and swept up last thing each session. In the youth leader's words:

> *"I believe in making kids work a bit and not giving in to their whims - they're not always right".*

Offenders were *"banned out"* for a while or if no one owned up to damage then the club was closed for repairs. There was *"rough justice"*. The youth leader was stronger than any member as the arm wrestling contests during all night sessions always proved. His principle of *"no favouritism"* could lead to rough tackling during a football match followed by judgements like *"that's for when I didn't catch you at it on Thursday!"*

Two undergraduate students who spent a fortnight observing the moods of the Bunker noted:

> *"There were plenty of grouses about his being too strict but the general consensus was that the Bunker depended upon his leadership. This was even noticeable when he wasn't there - suggesting that young people really wanted to be led and guided even if theywere somewhat reluctant to say so".* 2

The leader's way of helping members *"sort things out"* was invariably through action: the mini 'bus just appeared one day despite "County Policy on purchasing procedure". There were visits to other clubs, and being hosts in return. The Bunker was getting a reputation for having a go at anything; raft races across the *"Res"*,* charity stunts like pushing a bath to *'Skeggy'* or pool marathons and being a club open all week that you did not have to pay to go in.

The Bunker, then, in the evening was just like any other youth club but with no entrance fee.[3] A part-time worker and local postman

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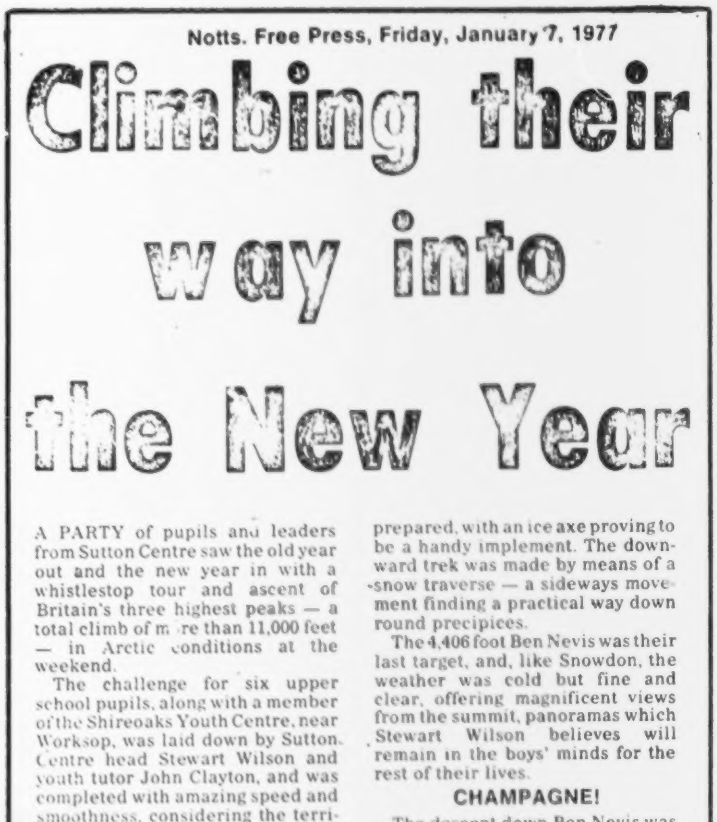
**King's Mill Reservoir.*

put it this way:

> *"The Bunker is not just used for youth, we follow the whole Sutton Centre ethos on use by the community and this is reflected in the informality of the Bunker. We are perhaps unique in the sense that we have no members in the true meaning. There are no subscriptions, the club and facilities can be used by anybody."*[4]



Notts. Free Press, Friday, January 7, 1977

Climbing their way into the New Year

A PARTY of pupils and leaders from Sutton Centre saw the old year out and the new year in with a whistlestop tour and ascent of Britain's three highest peaks — a total climb of more than 11,000 feet — in Arctic conditions at the weekend.

The challenge for six upper school pupils, along with a member of the Shireoaks Youth Centre, near Worksop, was laid down by Sutton Centre head Stewart Wilson and youth tutor John Clayton, and was completed with amazing speed and smoothness, considering the terrible weather and cramped conditions of travelling nine to a Land Rover.

FIRST, SNOWDON

The expedition began at 6 a.m. on New Year's Eve when the party headed west to negotiate the icy slopes of Snowdon. This they accomplished in about three and a half hours, and with hardly a pause for breath, they were back into the Land Rover and travelling north to the Lake District.

At midnight, while most people were toasting the New Year, the lads — Paul Welch, Steven Orrell, Colin Coupe, David Richardson, John Greasley and Andrew Wilson, all aged 15 or 16 — along with Alan Sanders from Shireoaks and their two leaders, were tucking into a special stew prepared by John Clayton, wrapped up in their sleeping bags in tents at the foot of Scafell, England's highest mountain.

The ascent next morning was carried out in a biting blizzard and at times the climbers were up to their knees in snow. But they were well prepared, with an ice axe proving to be a handy implement. The downward trek was made by means of a snow traverse — a sideways movement finding a practical way down round precipices.

The 4,406 foot Ben Nevis was their last target, and, like Snowdon, the weather was cold but fine and clear, offering magnificent views from the summit, panoramas which Stewart Wilson believes will remain in the boys' minds for the rest of their lives.

CHAMPAGNE!

The descent down Ben Nevis was made in spectacular fashion, screeing 2,000 feet in 20 minutes and then cracking open a bottle of champagne to celebrate the expedition's success.

Home was the next destination, and after a total journey of more than 1,000 miles in under 70 hours, the party were back in Sutton at 2.30 a.m. on January 3.

The idea evolved at a meeting of the Breakfast Club, one of the centre's school/social groups, where Stewart Wilson expressed his keenness to continue a habit to which he had been accustomed at other schools of undertaking a mammoth walk around New Year.

The boys were interested and began a series of training routines — early morning runs and a climb up Kinder Scout — to get them fit enough for the assignment.

The head had nothing but praise for the lads on their return. "Although they met with taxing conditions, with ice in their tents and frozen boots and gas cylinders, there was not a single complaint," he said.

"Membership" came through being a regular, growing up with the rest, doing chores and joining events and expeditions. Having to claim membership and be accepted puts the onus upon young people rather than upon the leaders. John Clayton's view of leadership was the commitment to organise and make things happen. He thought that *"young people ought to do things that are difficult, even dangerous at times"*. The club was a place for young people in which its members were to take responsibility; a resting place between the last and the next adventure. The leader and part-time staff had to cope with the Bunker's exposed position and the jerky tension held by a place full of young people. Although members never heard his spirited defence of youthfulness, he took the lead in defending the members' actions as well as finding ways of dealing with them.

Mick Gillott spoke for all part-timers when he said:-

> *"We are not in the ideal position really, being so open to the public*

and school. What appears to leaders as harmless horse-play looks terrible to anyone on the outside. This horse-play is, of course, one of the ways the kids discover their limitations and hopefully will temper their future behaviour. This Summer we closed the Bunker and let our own kids do the re-decorating. This proved very popular and has helped the kids to respect the fabric of the club." [5]

Horseplay outside the Bunker

The members themselves were getting older. The Bunker had recruited a generation of teenagers when it opened and they were quite hostile to twelve-year-olds "*messing about on the pool table*". There was a clash of cultures within the young themselves. The young kids were boisterous but seemed to be very easy to control and always eager to do jobs for the youth workers.

A survey of fifty Bunker members was made during the evenings of May 1977. Over a third were in employment, a third were Sutton Centre pupils and the rest attended Sutton's other secondary schools. The Sutton Centre pupils said that their usual number of evening visits each week was three, whilst for the others the most popular number of evening visits per week was five. Those interviewed said that the Bunker was important to them because there was no charge for entry, they could come and go all evening and there was no pressure to buy drinks or foodstuffs (even though almost all did buy something each night).

The Bunker was a town centre club whose approach was consistent with its Sutton Centre location. It was in the Bunker, in fact, that the "*ethos*" of Sutton Centre was discussed by member of staff who met at dinner time. Quite unconsciously Centre staff were mirroring the Feasibility Study's authors' meetings in the Portland Square Wimpy Bar just five years previously. But what was this "*ethos*" to which they referred? By"*ethos*" they did not mean "*aims*" but what we stand for, what should be possible here and what we have a right to expect from each other. Those who spoke of ethos implied that they could take the Feasibility Study's aims for granted.[6] The Bunker members had taken the aims for granted, they had achieved a solidarity with each other without projecting a hostility to the shoppers and staff who used their club as if it were an ordinary café. Mick Gillott's concluding comments touch upon both points:

> *"It is amazing to feel the atmosphere of how the snack bar trade is accepted in such a bustling youthful place. The word casual sums up the comings and goings very well but there also exists a tremendous bond which can be best illustrated by the reaction of the Bunker when a member was tragically killed in a motorcycle accident. Almost everyone 'chipped in' to buy a wreath and over sixty members attended the funeral. His mother later said that she never knew he had so many friends."* [7]

The Teachers' Centre.

Two floors above the Bunker was the floor shared between the Teachers' Centre and Communications and Resources. The Teachers' Centre had one of the biggest rooms; so big in fact that a dividing screen allowed for two functions to take place at the same time. The whole room was multi-use. There were boxes of resources along one wall, regularly changed displays of school work and equipment for preparing materials in the corner closest to the Warden's Office. The outer edges were quite distinctive. The chairs and tables towards the middle formed two large circles of 20 chairs each and the Warden placed no restrictions on who used them. Her phrase was *"as long as you tell me first, pet"*.

In truth, the Teachers' Centre was much more convenient for Centre staff than it was for the teachers of Ashfield district. The teachers had to find the area first. C. & R. had prepared a map of the Centre to date but even then Block 3B*required navigational skills. Block 3B was the bearing on which the many voluntary activities depended for their smooth functioning. Even with a map teachers from all over Ashfield (and who often lived yet further away) usually had trouble in finding their own centre. It was only distinctive from within. All the same, their prime time of 4.30 to 6.30 was an almost guaranteed quiet period. This left the Teachers' Centre free during the day for all manner of classes, meetings, seminars and social gatherings. It could serve as a staff room for each head's staff without ever having "*a staff room atmosphere*". This, in the Warden's words, was "*what we are here for*". In return, Teachers' Courses later in the evening spread all over the Block 3B top Adult Educ. floor or the school as a whole. Almost every head was in the Warden's debt for having used "*her space*" more than she had used theirs. Sometimes people made up for this by helping the Warden transport her equipment up or down the stairs. The Warden was among the first to discover that you could not park close enough to the main entrance, that the trolleys caught the doors and that the lift was temperamental.

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* Bunker and Careers on the ground floor, C. & R. on the first and all Adult Education offices with Teachers' Centre on the third floor.

She looked on the ground floor access of Nottingham Teachers' Centre with envy. As there was no staff room as such she seemed to accept providing a staff room or adult teaching space for any head who asked. Whatever the activity it still had to be understood that teachers had a guaranteed right of access at all times. The casual users had priority over the scheduled functions and the Block had to be open for them. The combined effect of the Teachers' Centre and C. & R. on top and the Bunker below was to bring a 6 day and 6 evening week to Block 3B. Put another way the Teachers' Centre helped to keep this "*part of the school*" open out of school time. (See Appendix 18: Teachers' Centre Log: Spring Term 1977).

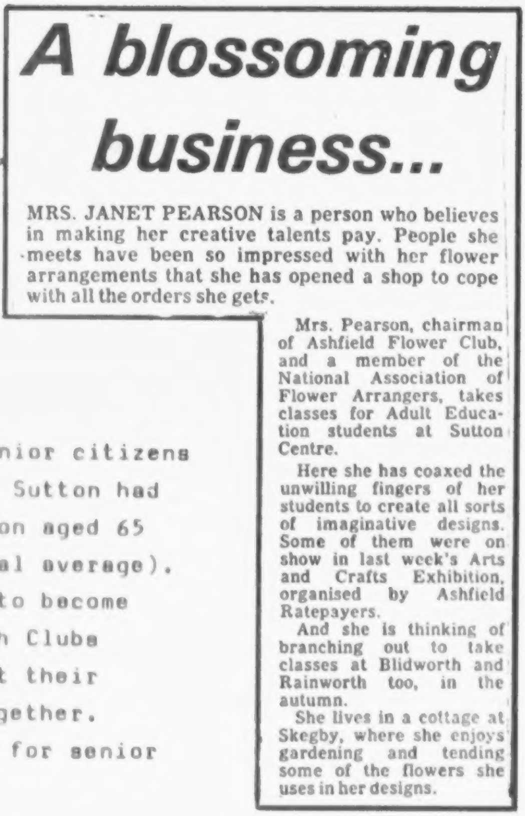
Adult Literacy.

The third small part in block 3B to require open and free access for its volunteers, part-timers and clients was Adult Literacy. This activity, it may be remembered, had begun in the school and grown so large that the organiser became a part-time Local Adult Education employee. The band of volunteers had grown to 32 and the clients numbered 182 by December 1976. The style was changing quite dramatically too. At first being an adult illiterate was thought to be a disgrace and so the client would need one to one tuition with someone their own age and occupation who would go to their house under cover of darkness. This image did not appeal to the Supervisor and nor did it fit in with being at Sutton Centre. Instead one fair-sized closed room was turned into a grotto of resources and adults were grouped together to be taught out in the open spaces whenever possible. The clients were not unhappy to go public, they were rarely socially inadequate and often had skilled jobs. They were cheerful, always doing favours *"in return"* for the free service and keen on social functions. The Supervisor would encourage older pupils and miners on their way to the University/W.E.A. day release course. Her regulars could do a Mode III C.S.E. in English which she had devised. There was adult literacy each weekday evening and a tutors' training course in the Teachers' Centre on Monday evening. All the same Adult Literacy was officially just twelve hours of the Supervisor's time, no payment by the students and had developed after the Feasibility Study's allocation of space. But at Sutton Centre active participation was nine points of the law and possession but a tenth. The town centre location and people coming for all kinds of reasons undoubtedly helped Adult Literacy. But so did the encouragement of other parts giving way as it became the main evening activity on the Adult Education floor. Despite continuous uncertainly about government policy and Local Authority funding the voluntary tutors pushed ahead with a broad basic skills approach that combined elementary reading with elementary mathematics.

Local Adult Education.

The Principal had a three pronged policy. Ten schools, halls and library rooms throughout the town took classes to people's immediate neighbourhoods. He called neighbourhoods his carpet-slipper catchment areas. Two part-time principals visited these out-stations but apart from that the tutors ran their keep-fit and domestic skills classes in a time honoured fashion. Over 2,000 people were served without ever seeing Sutton Centre. Next there were the day time and evening classes at the Centre which were either the *"bread and butter"* variety for those living locally or those using Home Management, Technical Studies and Languages equipment. (See Appendix 19). For both these kinds of classes there needed to be a minimum registration of twelve people who paid at a rate of 35p. per session. In recognition of shift-work though, it was possible to just pay in advance for those classes which could be attended. The principle was to become a class member by registration and payment in advance unless a senior citizen.

The creation of an exception for senior citizens had both its cause and its effect. Sutton had more than 14% of its total population aged 65 and over (3% higher than the national average). The effect was for Adult Education to become in part a social service. The Lunch Clubs were all senior citizens who brought their own food and then cooked and ate together. Indeed day time classes were wholly for senior citizens.



A blossoming business...

MRS. JANET PEARSON is a person who believes in making her creative talents pay. People she meets have been so impressed with her flower arrangements that she has opened a shop to cope with all the orders she gets.

Mrs. Pearson, chairman of Ashfield Flower Club, and a member of the National Association of Flower Arrangers, takes classes for Adult Education students at Sutton Centre.

Here she has coaxed the unwilling fingers of her students to create all sorts of imaginative designs. Some of them were on show in last week's Arts and Crafts Exhibition, organised by Ashfield Ratepayers.

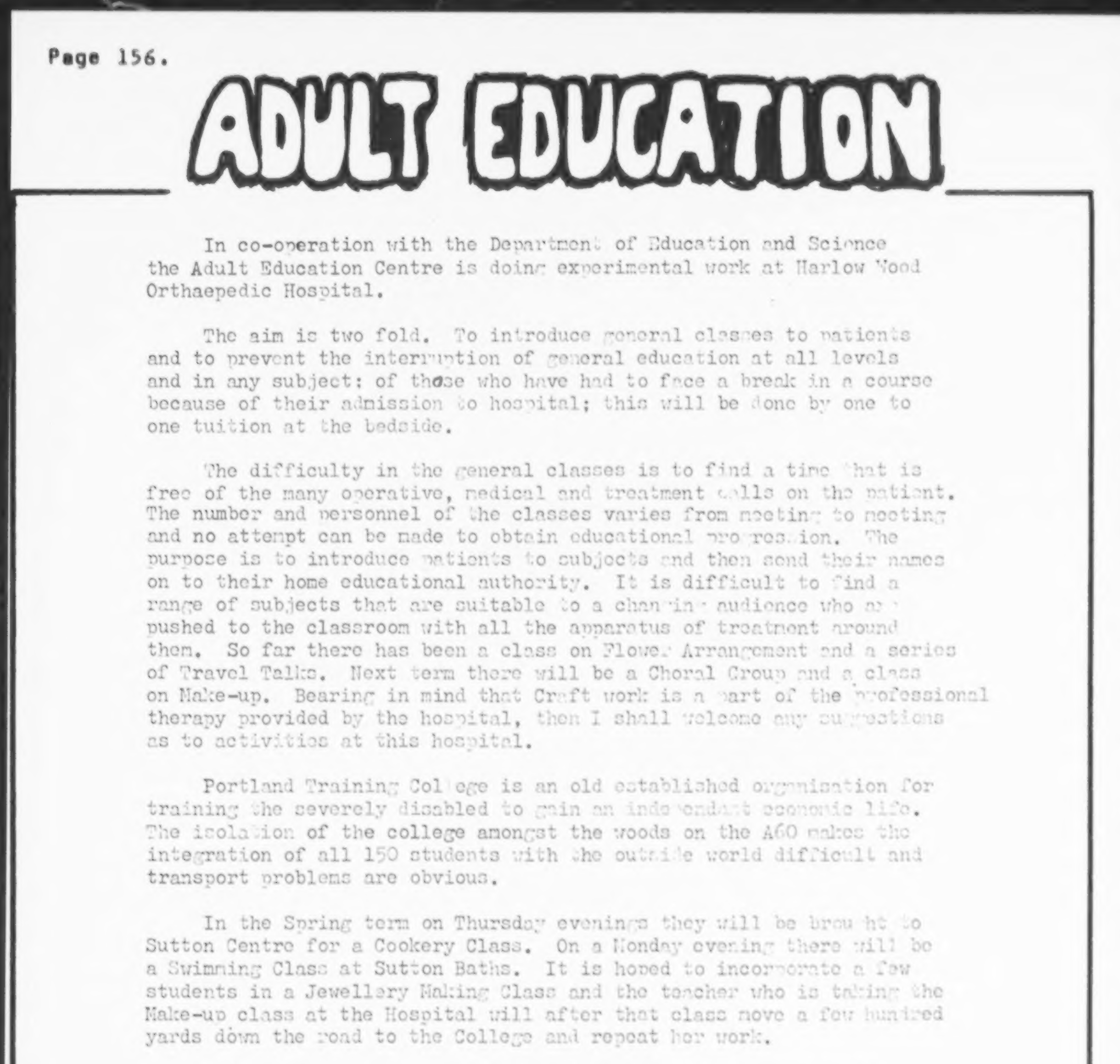
And she is thinking of branching out to take classes at Blidworth and Rainworth too, in the autumn.

She lives in a cottage at Skegby, where she enjoys gardening and tending some of the flowers she uses in her designs.

EVENING POST 17.6.77.

By extending the principle of exception the organiser took classes to every old people's home and block of flats in the town. Ashfield District Council's policy since the mid 60's had been to put up purpose built flatlets with a social/recreation room on each council estate and thus free council houses for young families. Movement to Music - an even tempo keep-fit - took place at least once a week at each home.

All these classes were organised by one full-time Principal and a part-time secretary. The assumption was that classes were self-managing and made up of adults more senior in years than those attending the school's 11th sessions. The more the social service



Page 156.

ADULT EDUCATION

In co-operation with the Department of Education and Science the Adult Education Centre is doing experimental work at Harlow Wood Orthaepedic Hospital.

The aim is two fold. To introduce general classes to patients and to prevent the interruption of general education at all levels and in any subject: of those who have had to face a break in a course because of their admission to hospital; this will be done by one to one tuition at the bedside.

The difficulty in the general classes is to find a time that is free of the many operative, medical and treatment calls on the patient. The number and personnel of the classes varies from meeting to meeting and no attempt can be made to obtain educational progression. The purpose is to introduce patients to subjects and then send their names on to their home educational authority. It is difficult to find a range of subjects that are suitable to a changing audience who are pushed to the classroom with all the apparatus of treatment around them. So far there has been a class on Flower Arrangement and a series of Travel Talks. Next term there will be a Choral Group and a class on Make-up. Bearing in mind that Craft work is a part of the professional therapy provided by the hospital, then I shall welcome any suggestions as to activities at this hospital.

Portland Training College is an old established organisation for training the severely disabled to gain an independent economic life. The isolation of the college amongst the woods on the A60 makes the integration of all 150 students with the outside world difficult and transport problems are obvious.

In the Spring term on Thursday evenings they will be brought to Sutton Centre for a Cookery Class. On a Monday evening there will be a Swimming Class at Sutton Baths. It is hoped to incorporate a few students in a Jewellery Making Class and the teacher who is taking the Make-up class at the Hospital will after that class move a few hundred yards down the road to the College and repeat her work.

Both projects are an exciting and a worthwhile extension of Adult Education.

I shall be willing to discuss them with any staff members who are interested. Philip Turnbull Edmunds

was emphasised the less the competition. The self-managing aspect and the right to attend through payment or exception made L.E.A. classes as openly accessible as they could be given financial constraints. Nevertheless, there was a thread in the service which rendered the client a customer and the provision a cafeteria of standard fare. L.E.A. classes had fixed times and no casual or spontaneous events. They only required space guarantees at set times, usually alongside school daytime or 11th sessions. They reinforced the need to be open outside traditional hours but only to the extent of their prospectus. The implication of this confirms the Feasibility Study's suspicions that membership and payment effect fewer guarantees for the public than does open access. A prospectus which says when a building should be open also implies that at other times it will be closed - even to those who are in positions of responsibility when it is open. The existence of the Adult Education floor between the Teachers' Centre and the Bunker could have helped the service towards its own informal, casual activities - but only if the financing of membership were altered to membership of the Centre at large which contributed to such adult education provision. This step, the very next step, simply could not be taken although the Principal argued that it should and it had been taken elsewhere. Although he wanted to develop new approaches to adult education and was spurred on by the success of 11th sessions, he could not do so.

Workers' Educational Association.

In one of the smallest offices on the Adult Education floor there were the University Extra Mural Tutor, the W.E.A. Area Organiser, a part-time secretary and the pigeon hole for the W.E.A.'s Tutor to the Mining Industry. It was indeed fortunate that for so long there had been close links in the Nottinghamshire Region between the University and the W.E.A.

The Area Organiser was responsible for courses to the North and West of Nottingham City. Membership of a class led to membership of a local association. It was the association that proposed which courses would take place and the Area Organiser's job to find people to teach them. The general criticism often made was that middle class recreational interests (music, art appreciation and near professional hobbies like Geology) came to dominate. The Area Organiser let associations determine their own complexion and concentrated his energies on Trades' Union Training, Health and Safety at Work and Shop Stewards' Courses. In this way the Sutton branch association members visited the office but had little idea of the Centre's scope. So much of the organiser's time was spent negotiating day release - particularly with the fragmented hosiery employers - that his hands were full of delicate deals. The W.E.A. turned to using libraries as they did in so many other areas with the exception of

Music Appreciation in the Music Block. Members of the association simply did not consider being members of Sutton Centre whilst work people on intensive courses and weekend schools fleetingly filled the floor either as representatives of their workplace or their union and usually as representatives of both. In the case of the W.E.A. membership actually cast a kind of myopia whilst work people could be brought together in large numbers whenever conditions permitted. And then being in the middle of the region and middle of the town was most convenient. So many unions used the Devonshire Suite for gatherings already that many paid officials could switch to autopilot when Sutton was the venue. The only trouble was they often went automatically to the Devonshire Suite first!

The University Delegacy for Extra Mural Studies.

Until Sutton Centre opened the two year day release course for miners, both face-workers and deputies, had been held in Nottingham. Men from the North and West had driven long distances as course members came from all over the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire coalfields. Holding the course at Sutton Centre brought the course closer to them. University tutors came out from the campus to teach them (31 1st. years and 23 2nd. years). The competition to get on the course was strong. It was a working-day off thinking, arguing and writing about the industry, its economy and politics. A closed lecture room with a roller blackboard, tables in a boardroom arrangement and ashtrays of tobacco cans all pointed to the style. Membership of the course was membership of the class, arguing with lecturers and each other. Every candidate for a union position always listed the courses he had attended. The course was a route of direct access into trades unions for adult educators and a stepping stone to full-time union positions or full-time education for work people. Both are very serious matters indeed. The closed room helped to procure "*privacy*" as well as produce intensity.

Between them, the W.E.A. Tutor for the mining industry and the University Resident Tutor, they interviewed students, had debates on the curriculum and dealt with the industry's officials. In time the course led to a Saturday Conference and a fortnightly weekend class on the "British Economy and Society since 1945" for the 12 to 14 really serious "*students*". The university imported its style and protected the development of its clients.

The University Resident Tutor was therefore the immediate connection with higher and further education. On the same floor a"client"could, in time, go from adult literacy to L.E.A. classes to a University class. The latter was possible simply because the Resident Tutor supported a school initiative with specialist staff. Stewart Wilson had wanted an open 'A' level, Humanities and Sciences for sixth formers and adults equally. But in 1976 there were but two sixth formers and the response to an advertisement for 'A' levels was much larger than expected. The Resident Tutor agreed to pilot four courses, 'Sociology', 'Psychology', 'Economics' and 'Economic and Social History'. Once again the Teachers' Centre was used (for two courses with the room divided) as well as the closed "*miners' room*" and an area in Literature and Drama. Stewart Wilson interviewed every prospective student and supplied part-time tutors with a pen-portrait of their interests. It was the first time Sutton had seen serious or scholarly courses. And such work, both day and evening brought the need for quiet study and concentration. There was almost bound to be conflict with C. & R. above during the day and the Bunker beneath during the evening. The very fact of holding classes close to the W.E.A./University office could be read as an uncertainty in relation to the Centre as a whole. Strictly speaking a University is not supposed to teach 'A' levels and the courses had to be described as "Introductions to....". The low profile given to the courses and their clients was, therefore, a combination of the characteristic style of University work and a practical defence until the school or L.E.A. Adult Education could take over the activity. The Resident Tutor satisfied himself in much the same way as had the W.E.A. Area Organiser. The course members were mostly from the manual and clerical grades. The Resident Tutor was prepared to take risks in favour of working class adult education.[9] In fact, that was his interpretation of the purpose of Sutton Centre. He injected a political purpose into the University's role and found ample support in the Feasibility Study's aims. In this waythe "*politics of the catchment area*" - whom do we serve - became "*politics for the catchment area*" - how can the politics of the area be best informed? No other part of the Centre was ever so intentionally explicit.

The Day Centre.

The full title of the Social Service provision was the High Pavement Centre for the Physically Handicapped and Elderly. Sutton Day Centre, the logical choice, was used by the Psychiatric Day Centre at nearby King's Mill Hospital. The Day Centre, as it was usually known by insiders, took its name from facing, not the market place, but Sutton's only stretch of dual carriageway.

The "*members*" were of two kinds and in precise proportions. The whole of Ashfield's registered physically handicapped were eligible to apply for membership. They did this through medical referrals and a report from the Area Occupational Therapist. There was competition, then, between the handicapped (and their G.P.s.) as places were limited and a place meant transportation on two days a week. In no way could all of Ashfield's disabled be accommodated if either the available transport or the purpose-built areas or the paid-staff were used as criteria. There was, therefore, politics in where people came from, the case made for them and how many registered disabled came to make up the 75% of attenders.

The remaining quarter were ambulant elderly who found their own way but who were also accorded member status. By implication there was no drop-in facility at all but a few ambulant disabled crossed the two categories and attended daily. Nevertheless, they were counted as part of the 75%. What the word "*member*" meant here was a person admitted to facilities, effectively to the privilege of care. The contrast between the Bunker and the Day Centre was therefore not the obvious one of young or old people but the significance of strangers. "Visitors to the Day Centre were welcome" and yet it was the idea of being a visitor that felt strange at Sutton Centre (See Appendix 20).

Membership of the Day Centre changed. Death, severe deterioration, hospitalisation all occurred each year. At least in part response then, the Day Centre followed the seasons and carried members forward through the traditional festivals of Harvest Suppers, Christmas Fares, East Bonnet Parades, Strawberry teas and summer holidays (See Appendix 21). Craft rooms in woodwork, pottery and needlework all had their regulars who would be making articles for the next seasonal sale of work.

The craft assistants studied what members could do and often assembled an informal production line based upon a wheelchair-bound sewing felt pieces and passing them to a blind person for the cotton stuffing to make a child's toy. One such line had six people round the table together.

Pottery and woodwork reached up to the standard of the gifted instructors. Their creations gave members targets to go for. On most days members went straight to "*their places*" and stayed there apart from lunch. There were routines to the day and the week; men on the billiards and a game of bingo in the afternoon, tea from the trolley and sweets at wholesale prices. The biggest group was the blind who knew the voices of all the "*characters*". The banter was continuous as often all the people had in common was their age or degree of disability. All kinds of religious, political and sexual divisions were maintained throughout the day. The staff retreated together to the secretary's office twice a day only to be disturbed by the toilet bell ringing. Generally speaking they wanted a staff room more than anything else. (Later they would be able to use the common staff room).

When members went out into the rest of the building or to other places they did so with assistance and as members of the Day Centre. Members went out on trips and visiting performers brought in light entertainment. Visiting performers included mobile theatres, local drama groups, musicians and dramatists from the school. Members of the staff were voluntary entertainers too. The Day Centre trips included trips to the theatre, Christmas shopping and a major event, namely the Group holiday for one week. There was an Annual Dance at Sutton's Devonshire Suite which many other Centre staff also attended. The Christmas Market was a major fund-raising event whose proceeds went towards the group holiday. The Day Centre fielded a stall at the School's Summer Fete.

The School gave some of its tutor's time for archery and the playing of other games. This led, in turn, to inter-centre indoor games being played against other Day Centres.

Pupils took Day Centre members to and from their lunch in the Ploughmans Area and pupils on Community Service helped in the Day Centre.

Day Centre Dance

A few members had begun to attend school and adult education classes. A very gradual process of integration was underway with the Day Centre gaining a lot of support and little steps outside its confines being taken by individual members. In this way "*the inner tranquility was preserved*".

As with the Bunker the atmosphere became more distinctive in the evenings. The Drama Club, led by a school tutor, met on Monday and Wednesday evenings. On Tuesday there was a woodwork class with a small group of devotees. The Thursday Club was a 50/50 club; able bodied relatives often accompanied disabled people. The drivers were all volunteers. Friday evening was P.H.A.B. Club. The day-time

DAY CENTRE

On May 5th a party of forty Day Centre members left for a week's holiday at the Palace Hotel, Ostend. The week was an enormous success and included a visit to Holland and a riotous evening spent in a night club in Brussells.

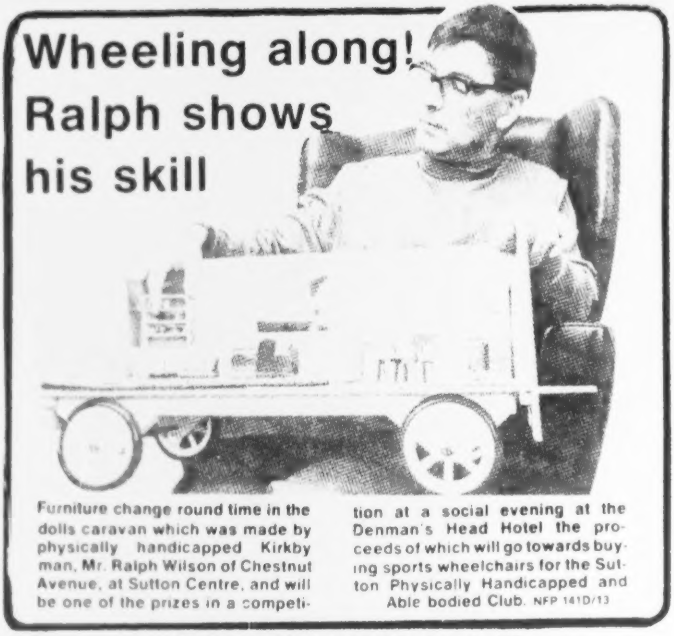
Ken Vardy has started a fishing club for Day Centre members. The members - two of whom are chair-bound have fished the Trent at Stoke Bardolph and have managed to actually catch fish they tell us!

Terry Quinby has managed to enlist a number of volunteers from the Day Centre to start a Sailing Club. The club, which will meet every Wednesday, will begin sailing seriously in the Autumn term.

STRAWBERRY TEAS STRIPTEASE

The whole notion of a strawberry tea might conjure up images of genteel summer afternoons on the croquet lawn to you, but to about fifty members of The Day Centre it has come to mean something interestingly different. On 20th July, before the traditional dishes of strawberries and cream were handed out, members of The Centre Staff entertained the party-goers with a series of sketches and songs - culminating in a hilarious "mock" (we should hasten to add) Striptease show by Irene and Cheryl - two care attendants in the Centre.

members would have been agog if they had seen the disco and darkened areas in their lounge area. In this respect the '*ethos*' had again been persuasive. The Day Centre was used by clubs concerned with a commitment to the handicapped. As in the day time those who attended were expected to be members and their leaders to be responsible persons. If a place was not a drop-in facility in the day it did not become one in the evening either.



Wheeling along! Ralph shows his skill

Furniture change round time in the dolls caravan which was made by physically handicapped Kirkby man, Mr. Ralph Wilson of Chestnut Avenue, at Sutton Centre, and will be one of the prizes in a competition at a social evening at the Denman's Head Hotel the proceeds of which will go towards buying sports wheelchairs for the Sutton Physically Handicapped and Able bodied Club. NFP 141D/13

NOTTS. FREE PRESS 18.3.77.

All this and its own Social Services Committee and League of Friends led to an independence within Sutton Centre and to a gradual breaching by more sturdily independent members. The dilemma could well have been why go to all the effort to be a member of the Day Centre only to wander elsewhere on arrival? Remaining in the Day Centre was, at least in part, a retention of the right of membership which made the area full to its allotted capacity. For the time being though, the sheer quality of the handicrafts, the regular recurrence of seasonal celebrations and the warmth and comfort may well have been all that most members wanted or councillors and officials expected. Other parts of the Centre hoped to nurture the small developments of initiative and co-operation to reinforce the moments of radicalism until they, too, became regular routines and there had been some progress.

The Careers Service.

The Careers Office was a self-contained group of offices backing onto the Bunker. Just a four inch wall separated the officers from a small host of their clients and they were just beneath one of the major schools which they serviced. But neither of these proximities were interpreted as an advantage. The officer concerned was openly at odds with the school and its C.S.E.'s policy. Further he did not wish to be accused of favouritism. Finally the Personal Relationship's Course was offering a lot of careers' advice and work experience as a suspended week option for fourth year pupils.

The office kept office hours and no more. Careers talks were sometimes held in the Teachers' Centre. Photocopying was taken by clerks to C. & R. and the second officer attended the Centre Co-ordinating Committee meetings.

The Careers Officer was against his location and what was happening within it. He questioned the implications for his catchment area of being at one particular school. It was his own membership of Sutton Centre that he doubted. The School's tutors prickled, sought to supply more information and then avoided contact. The clash of styles was contained and remained at a restrained level just because the Careers Office was entirely separate and because the Centre continued to meet the Careers Office's periodic needs for a meeting place and for photocopies. No part ever asked to "use" the Careers Office.

This does pose the dilemma of centralising services which are common to more than one school yet set on the site of a single school. In their catch-all efforts for the idea of centrality had the planners not included some inherently incompatible parts? The Careers Officer had been placed in a dilemma by two architectural decisions, the first to include his office in the building and the second to make it such an integral part.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: THE RECREATION SECTION.

> *"There is no success where there is no possibility of failure, no art without the resistance of the medium".*
>
> *Raymond Chandler.*

Sutton Centre was the first joint-use scheme in Ashfield. That is the Centre was the first piece of property-sharing between the County Education Department and Ashfield District Council. Ashfield did not have a Leisure Services Department in being: the closest existing administrative body was responsible for parks; bowling greens; the baths and public lettings of halls. These responsibilities were a few among many in the Engineer and Surveyor's Department which had grown rapidly in the 1960's with the Idlewells Centre development. The Departmental view had never been much in favour of the plans or the property arrangements; it preferred a commercial partnership - shopping and leisure for example - with sole separate ownership of each. The Town Clerk, Mr. Walter Laughton had carried the day for Sutton Centre. It was Walter Laughton's ready agreement and quick calling of meetings which had kept the pace up during the planning stages.

Mr. Laughton was close to retirement. Recreation would be in its infancy in Ashfield but introduced on a spectacular scale and lodged in a department which had not been noted for its enthusiasm for this particular capital project. After Walter Laughton retired in April 1974 a rift opened between the two authorities. Cordial relations were a casualty of local government reorganisation. Nevertheless, construction of the sports facilities continued despite set-backs due to materials shortages.

County Council officials had built up an understanding of what recreation meant in joint-use schemes. It was a term which connected sport to leisure. Sport was the active playing of competitive games whilst leisure included dances, concerts, exhibitions and conferences. In fact, leisure meant almost any public gathering taking place in weatherproof surroundings. There was no restriction on what could be provided. The difference came from sport depending upon particular facilities and leisure requiring promotion. Both were possible but they called for a variation in approach.

At other joint-use centres sport had become the staple diet which was often suspended for special events. The events made more money and drew in a different clientèle. Recreation was a kind of pivot which balanced the interests of sportspeople and people in general. And so a Recreation Manager would be responsible for both encouraging regular play and putting on occasions of a more informal kind. At Sutton Centre the Recreation Manager would have more space and scope than anywhere else in the county.

Recreation Management, too, was in its infancy. A comparison could be drawn between Personnel Management just after the Second World War and Recreation Management in the early 1970's. For just after the war ex-officers, particularly from the Navy, found work in Personnel Management because they had been "*good with men*". There were no training schemes or degrees and diplomas so Personnel Managers were recruited from the skill "*next door*". Recreation Managers were part of a similar pattern. Many Recreation Managers were coming from the ranks of school sports teachers. On the face of it this could be a good thing. Sports teachers have training in dealing with young people. Recreation Management could benefit from "*importing*" skills at no cost.

In 1974, Ken Harlow, the head of sports at the Dukeries Comprehensive School in Nottinghamshire (the very school whose photographs were used to illustrate the Feasibility Study) was appointed Recreation Manager. He visited other sports centres. He became very active in the rapidly growing Association of Recreation Managers. He drew up his staffing requirements. And he made it plain to one and all that he was going to manage a section one day. There was considerable support for such a view to be drawn from one reading of the Feasibility Study and especially the revised version of the diagram which outlined his position. He introduced the phase "*section managers*" to describe youth leader and headmaster alike, thus reinforcing his own self-estimate. He was not to know then that his temporary state of having neither buildings nor staff was to last for nearly another three years.

Some points of real difference between the needs of County and the District emerged. Both would pay a proportion of the Recreation

Staff's salaries. The agreed basis was 60% and 40% (by County and District). The manager's salary proportions were the reverse, subtly supporting a division. The agreement centres upon Recreation staff servicing the school during school-time (and the public where they occurred) and then becoming a self-managed operation in the evenings, at weekends and during school holidays.* The District, therefore, had an entirely different catchment area and a commercial issue to face. For the time being Sutton Centre would serve the whole of Ashfield. It would need to reach out to all its ratepayers. When the people of Ashfield became paying members of the public their payments would offset the subsidy being made. There would be competition with commercial leisure services. The County needed the smooth functioning of school premises. The District needed the rough and tumble of revenue raising. The Recreation Manager would need to balance these two needs year in and year out. There were two pipers calling two tunes: give the school what they want and give the public what they want. The needs were different with the seeds of conflict over costs and charges.

Even in 1974, though, developments had taken place which made Sutton Centre multi-use rather than joint-use. There was a complexity which went way beyond joint-ownership. But not everything had yet been agreed and paid for.

All the structural work and most of the finishing were completed by Easter 1976. The school gleefully moved in during its allotted periods. But the public did not. A dispute between the Engineer's department and the County Architects was underway. Centre News carried a mildly provocative cover that Summer to the effect of would the public be allowed in by September? (see following page) It would not. Centre News' September cover showed the outside of the ice-rink under a caption taken from Thomas Hughes:-

> "*Leisure is the right of every man and the privilege of the few.*"

Tutors had been taking their groups to Nottingham Ice Rink in preparation. But now there was a deadlock rather than a deadline. Sutton Centre Users' Association gained 3,000 signatures in a few days on a petition asking for the public to be allowed in. The Bowls Association were having difficulty organising their League fixtures because they did not know when the extra rinks would be available.

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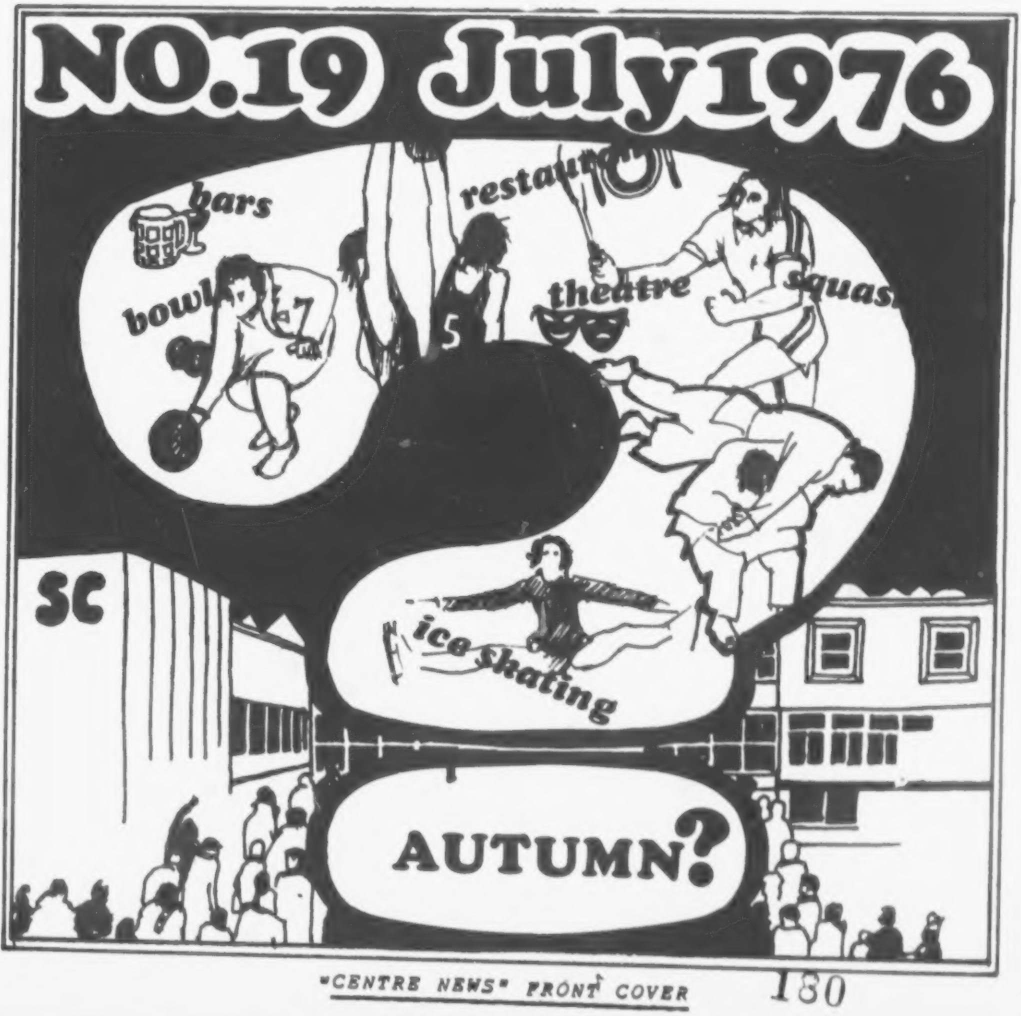
* Apart from ensuring that the accommodation was available and in good order, the Recreation Manager has no other role as far as school use is concerned.

In October 1976 the reason for the dispute became known through the Press: "*the joint-use of the Centre did not conform to the requirements of building regulations*". The "*fire-break*" dispute was referred to higher authority. The leaders of both the County Council and the District Council asked the Secretary of State for the Environment to "*expedite his decision*".

Basically the argument represented a struggle over property in one of the neatest ways possible. A school is said to be for staff and pupils who are agile, or at least know their way around. So in the



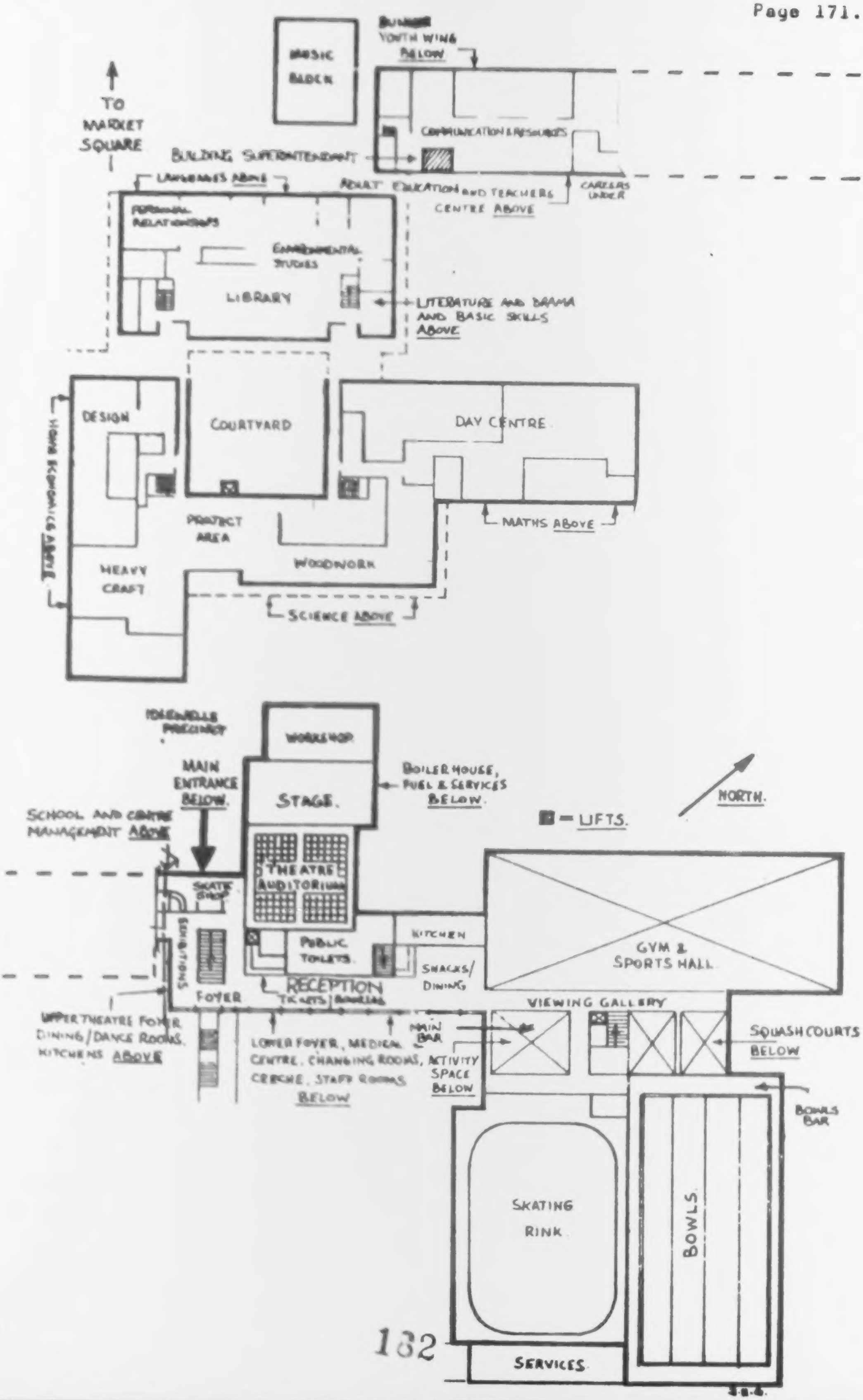
"CENTRE NEWS" FRONT† COVER

event of a fire a school does not take long to evacuate. The public, though, can be new to the building or not capable of moving quickly. The fire break period (that is how long walls and doors should withstand flames before finally being burned through) is much longer for public buildings than for schools. The expensive conversion, required by law, would *'prove'* the Sports Centre was for the public, (i.e. District) as distinct from the pupils (i.e. County). This struggle had not taken place anywhere else in the County and there were Districts with two to four joint-use buildings. A careful reading of the Minister's statement reveals a hint of irritation over being asked to make a speedy decision on "*the mass of conflicting and competing evidence*". A decision did follow quickly within a month though; the ceiling panels had to be removed and replaced and foam put between the school and the sports hall (between the panels and the floor above). The limit of the school - and by implication all other County Council activity - was marked by its doors to the Foyer. The map of Sutton Centre (see over) had been divided in two. The effect on the Day Centre members was immediate: it was no longer clear that they could go anywhere except into the Day Centre itself.

A date was set for the "*opening*". The school had begun to be available in September 1973 and the Recreation Centre would be open to the public from 7th February 1977. Recreation staff had to be recruited: managers; supervisors; leisure attendants; receptionists and so on. The groundwork for recruitment had been completed earlier in the year.

On 11th March 1976 the Education Policy Sub-Committee at County Hall had considered the document headed "Appendix to Agenda item number 4 (3) (a)" and titled: "Joint Management Services Report on the proposed staffing requirements for the joint-use Sutton Centre". The Management Services of County and District Councils had worked together to propose a staffing structure. The substantial text began:-

> "*The objectives of the Sutton Centre are aimed at achieving integration and community participation....The main aims of this report are to attempt to quantify the optimum number of staff and to suggest methods of operating common services*".


MUSIC BLOCK
YOUTH WING BELOW
TO MARKET SQUARE
COMMUNICATION & RESOURCES
BUILDING SUPERINTENDENT
LANGUAGES ABOVE
ADULT EDUCATION AND TEACHERS CENTRE ABOVE
CAREERS UNDER
PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS
ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES
LIBRARY
LITERATURE AND DRAMA AND BASIC SKILLS ABOVE
DESIGN
COURTYARD
DAY CENTRE
HOME ECONOMICS ABOVE
PROJECT AREA
HEAVY CRAFT
WOODWORK
MATHS ABOVE
SCIENCE ABOVE
PRECINCT
WORKSHOP
MAIN ENTRANCE BELOW.
STAGE.
BOILER HOUSE, FUEL & SERVICES BELOW.
NORTH.
■ = LIFTS.
SCHOOL AND CENTRE MANAGEMENT ABOVE
SKATE SHOP
THEATRE AUDITORIUM
EXHIBITIONS
PUBLIC TOILETS.
KITCHEN
SNACKS/ DINING
GYM & SPORTS HALL
RECEPTION
TICKETS
BOOKINGS
FOYER
VIEWING GALLERY
UPPER THEATRE FOYER DINING/DANCE ROOMS. KITCHENS ABOVE
LOWER FOYER, MEDICAL CENTRE, CHANGING ROOMS, CRECHE, STAFF ROOMS BELOW
MAIN BAR
ACTIVITY SPACE BELOW
SQUASH COURTS BELOW
BOWLS BAR
SKATING RINK
BOWLS
SERVICES

Essentially the joint report is concerned with matters of integration rather than community participation. Indeed at this time participation was less and less frequently referred to. It may be that participation was being deferred until all was functioning properly. It is also possible that the problems of power sharing were finally coming home to roost.

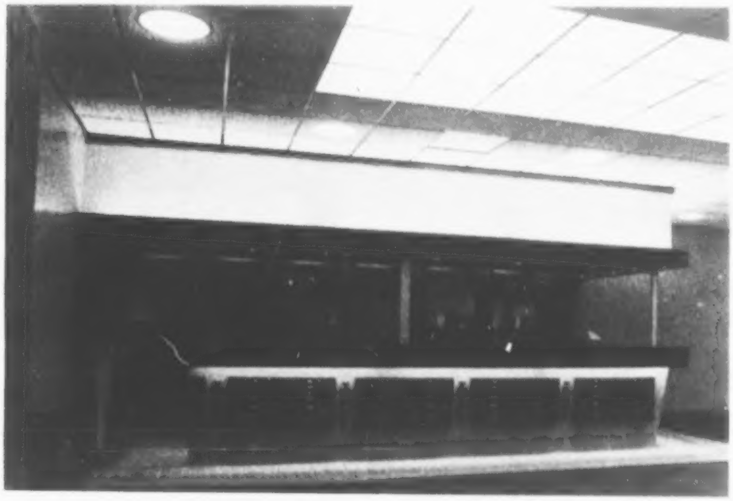
The report falls into two parts, for staffing Recreation and manning the building. The former is a matter of great detail and generous calculations. The report's writers were able to draw upon the time and views of the Recreation Manager. They record:-

> *"Mr. Harlow was already in position as the Manager of the joint-use sports centre and has been able to provide invaluable information which has been of immense assistance to the management services sections during the course of their investigations."*

This invaluable information provided the basis of the staffing structure.

> *"To enable the Manager to concentrate on the broader aspects of operation policy, development of promotions, it will be necessary to provide support in the form of Assistant Managers in those areas of specialisation. These types of specialised areas can be basically interpreted as follows:-*
>
> 1. *Administrative Management.*
> 2. *Management of activities involving the Sports Hall Activity Areas, Squash Courts and outdoor play areas.*
> 3. *Management of Ice Rink Activities.*
> 4. *Management of Bowls Hall*
> 5. *Management of Theatre.*
> 6. *Management of Licensed Bars etc. Catering.*
> 7. *Management of Common Services: i.e. cleaning, plant maintenance, building mainenance, caretaking and security."*

Thus rather than there be one man - one job there is a proposal that there be one man - one task. There is no suggestion here of a Duty Manager taking turns behind the Bar when it's busy: every separate task is accorded a manager.



THE BOWLS HALL BAR BEFORE FITTINGS

Further, ninety-eight hours a week are said to be required for managerial cover "throughout the entire operational periods." Although it was indicated by the County Council's Education Department that they would not require any assistance from the Sports Centre Staff for their periods of usage it was, however, desirable to "ensure that the full managerial and supervisory cover is provided within these areas by the Sports Centre staff". Five Assistant Recreation Managers were proposed who would be engaged on a five-day thirty-seven hour week. There would be a rota, too, for evening and weekend work and overtime paid accordingly.

The report continued:

> "*...when one considers the number of people that could be in the Sports Centre at any one time during the peak period sessions, it becomes difficult to see how one duty officer would be able to pay sufficient attention to all the areas involving direct management controls and disciplines without the assistance and support of line management.*"

Unlike any other Sports Centre in the county a tier of supervisors were proposed. Their first duty would be to act as liaison between Assistant Recreation Managers and manual workers employed within the Centre.

The Leisure Attendants are said to have three main areas of responsibility:-

1. The control of the Users at Entry and Exit points and their behaviour whilst within the Sports Centre.
2. Those aspects of safety relating to all types of equipment.
3. The issue and control of equipment for hire.

Further calculations lead to the conclusion that there will be a need for three attendants on the Ice-Rink at all times. Along with two attendants elsewhere, fifteen full-time attendants were needed.

In effect, the proposals would lead to a full presence throughout the year, school terms and holidays alike. But whilst the school was in session teachers and pupils would occupy the theatre, dining hall, practice area and part of the Ice-Rink. The public would only have access to areas where pupils could not go: three squash courts, two bars, the bowls hall and four-fifths of the ice-skating area. The calculated staffing needs seem more appropriate to an independent or "free-standing" Recreation Centre and yet these proposals were supported by the Joint Management Services Group.

In the event, the County Council did not agree that supervisors were necessary and the District Council undertook to pay their salaries in full. The County Council did agree to support there being an Assistant Recreation Manager - Administration. There would be many such matters to deal with. It also appeared that a common administration was not wanted by the other heads:

> *"Following discussions with the County Council's Heads of Departments within the Centre and the County Management Services Unit, it was indicated that separate administration services would be more advantageous, although it was considered that the telephone system should be operated on a joint basis."*

There was no examination of what was meant by administration or to whom and how it would be more advantageous separately. Indeed, it is possible that the point was missed entirely. Senior staff recalled being asked if they favoured a central administration and interpretated this as the establishment of a typing pool; in effect the loss of their own secretary/receptionists. No one wanted to have a share in a person's pay which would mean that each and every piece of typing would have to be charmed out of a worker in front of a number of such workers. Worse still to lose a secretary and take one's turn in a typing pool is demotion. If each function was still going to pay a secretary's salary then why should he or she be put miles away "*just for the sake of it*"?

What therefore happened was a recommendation for operating a separate administrative section within the Sports Centre. This was much, much less than could have been expected. The possibility existed to create the position of a Co-ordinator who would look after catering, cleaning, the Crèche, advertising, reception and ticket sales, public lettings, transport, security, cash and the building maintenance. In contrast, the administration was limited to specific needs of the Sports Centre; namely receipt and control of cash, items of stock and the maintenance of control systems and procedure. Participation within the Centre had already led to the Coordinating Committee, the Users' Association and the service role of the School's Communications and Resources Department. If these could be coordinated then they could be capitalised upon. They were facilitators of the Centre as a whole which had developed gradually and were proofs of the existence of a '*common sense*'.

The new Administration post was to be that of a Deputy Recreation Manager who also banked petty cash and ran the telephone system. The participation taking place in the Centre would continue to be unaided. Had the existing participation been recognised and supported Sutton Centre could have been the first joint-use commitment with a coordinator working alongside the heads of school and recreation. The opportunity passed and the opening day approached. The newly appointed Sports Hall Manager summed the hopes and fears of many when he said:-

> *"I, myself, came for a job in an integrated leisure centre; its changed since then to being a District job. It changed about four days after I started in fact and its been getting more clearly a District job ever since.*
>
> *I don't mind admitting that the relations between District and County have been bad. Somebody is going to have to say: We are going to open on a particular day and then emphasise local needs and what the public wants to bring us together again."*

Every local newspaper gave the opening of the "*major part of the leisure facilities of Sutton Centre*" the full exposure of a blaze of publicity on the theme of "*Sport for All*". The phrase a "*blaze of publicity*" conjures up a picture of flash bulbs popping and the film star treatment. For a weekend, the public was told, the Centre

Notts Free Press

Four page pull-out Supplement

● **Ken Harlow**

KEN Harlow, the man ultimately responsible for the project's success, hopes the public will see Sutton Centre as an extension of their home, a place where they will always feel welcome, and at the same time make new friends and acquaintances.

It provides a big challenge for the man who took on the job of Recreation Manager three years ago with the prospect of running the centre almost immediately.

The delay hasn't meant he's been idle, however. In fact, the experience he has gained serving on numerous important bodies like the Association of Recreation Managers, a national organisation of which he is vice-chairman, and helping out on other leisure projects like the joint use centres at Annesley, Selston and Edgewood Drive, Hucknall, and the proposed Kirkby Centre.

Nevertheless, the delay — he came to Sutton in 1974 — must have been frustrating to him? "It was in one sense, but working closely with the Technical Services and Leisure Departments on leisure planning in general and the joint use projects has given me a wider knowledge of the district," he said.

His work with the recreation organisations means he now sees leisure as a national business, and even though he is pleased that the centre is finally opening, it is, to some extent, just part of the nationwide battle to bring leisure to the people.

He will be greatly helped by his own varied sporting background. He represented school and village at soccer, school, Army and college at rugby, has various representative honours in hockey, gymnastics, athletics and tennis, and is a qualified swimming coach — ample proof that Ken Harlow is an ideal man to get Sutton Centre under way.

Notts. Free Press,

Friday, January 28, 1977

SUTTON CENTRE

ICE RINK, BOWLS HALL
SQUASH COURTS
& MAIN HALL

Will be available for public use from

7th February, 1977

Why not come along and see what Sutton Centre has to offer you?

Building work is still not complete in parts of the Centre. This means that certain facilities such as the theatre and bar are not yet in use. Delay in opening these will be kept to a minimum. For the time being the access to the recreation areas will be from High Pavement.

Public car parking facilities are available within the Idlewells Centre.

There are two PUBLIC VIEWING DAYS on

Saturday and Sunday, 5th and 6th February

between 10.30 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

An ideal opportunity to see the facilities and meet the staff of the Centre.

SUTTON CENTRE WAS BUILT BY
NCC & ADC

Scheme began six years ago

IT was six years ago that the idea to create a sports centre in Sutton was born, six years in which its cost soared to more than £1 million as one problem after another put work behind schedule.

The original plan, estimated at £720,000 was approved by the old Sutton Urban District Council, and Ashfield District Council took it on.

Following the building of the school part of the complex, the sports section began to take shape and the opening date was scheduled for October 1974.

DELAY

It wasn't to be, however, because of a delay in the delivery of structural steel brought about the heavy demand for the material that year. The sheme was put back six months.

Worse was to follow. Ashfield Council technical officers pointed out that parts of the centre did not comply with building regulations. Then came the start of a series of drawn-out setbacks involving Ashfield Council, Notts. County Council and the Department of the Environment over fire safety regulations.

There appeared a glimmer of optimism in September, when it was forecast that if the Department of the Environment relaxed the regulations — a decision the county had been fighting for all along — the centre could be open by Christmas.

But the Department of Environment were not to be rushed into a hasty decision, and it was only this month that the news everyone had been waiting to hear arrived. The relaxations had been granted and the centre would open in February.

Finally, last week, the date was set: February 7, the day when all the criticisms of the apparently never ending delay will be forgotten, the Sutton Centre will start to play a major role in the life of the community as a whole as well as in the lives of the school children who already use its modern facilities.

BY IAN COOK

AND DAVID

WALTERS.

was available for viewing. After that they would have to pay. And the public was undeniably enthusiastic to have a look. They came in hundreds; tutor groups came with their parents; staff mobilised their neighbours.

The first problem was finding the entrance as Reception was not open. A huge queue wound round the back of the sports hall. There was a cold drizzle, cars fitfully tried to find an entrance and somewhere to park. There was not a single sign to Sutton Centre, car parks or the temporary reception. And there was a lot of agitation too. As word got round more people came and filed through a narrow single door past one receptionist. The following week the position was the same but each spectator had to pay.

As the Centre had only one telephone line other staff were unable to make or receive calls. The relationship with both public and other Centre staff was less than ideal, less than the high, high hopes had led them to believe. New "*no go zones*" were created almost the instant the facilities became public. The reprographics technician was looking for the head caretaker and was stopped by a zealous leisure attendant on her way down the sports hall corridor: "*I was walking round here before you were bloody well employed*" she replied. (Yet how could she be distinguished from an adult '*gate-crasher*'?)

The basic problem was that if Recreation Management was in its infancy then its shop floor equivalent was barely conceived. Attending to people's leisure had hardly got beyond making sure they were behaving themselves. Initially the attendants were concerned with crowd control and rather at a loss when asked to show people what to do. The ice-making machine broke down on the Wednesday and there were 200 children queuing outside. The delay in opening had allowed dust to settle in the compressor. The breakdown was almost symbolic - as if the sheer weight of usage and interest had caused a heart failure.

The ice rink was drawing more people in than the rest of the Centre put together. The press of spectators was becoming uncomfortable. At the weekends, spectators outnumbered skaters and spilled over into the sports hall galleries. There was no quota system for

THE ICE-
RINK

April 1977

The queue in good weather

Spectating through the window

admittance and so during the Easter holidays the rink and spectator areas were *'fair thronged'*, as Sutton people say (see Appendix 22). The newly formed Joint Sports Centre Management Committee* refused a request to ban teenage spectators which was made at their April meeting by the Recreation Manager.

Nevertheless, the Manager persisted in seeking to have young spectators banned and produced an eight-page report by the 16th May which was entitled "Sutton Centre Recreation Area - Controls from the Recreation Manager to his Chief Executive". The Report began by stressing that *'family participation'* was to be the aim of the Centre and then continued:-

> " *(i) it is vital that the climate is right for this.*
>
> *(ii) Climate depends on the correct and continual weekly, daily, minute by minute balancing of programme, controls, staff manipulation and adjustments. The quality and sensitivity of the staff and the discretion/authority to manipulate or adjust according to the great variety of circumstances is essential.* "

The report's introduction was followed by pages of problems as reported by staff: fee evasion; *"flooding of all areas by youth"*; aggressive *'ogling'* of young female participants; staff needled, confronted and attacked; theft and regular requests by staff for police visits.

It is again urged that unaccompanied under 18's be refused admission and if so,

> *"then the Bowls Hall window problem could well be minimised"*.

* The Committee was comprised of five District Councillors and three County Councillors. A District Councillor was the Chairman. A Deputy Education Director, Ashfield District Council's Chief Executive, the Area Education Officer, the Youth Services Area Officer, the Deputy Architect, the Headmaster, Recreation Manager and Assistant Recreation Manager (Administration) were *'in attendance'*. The Committee was scheduled to meet every six weeks. Some, but not all, of the elected members were also school governors. The Joint Sports Centre Management Committee was larger than the proposed Joint Council and had a much narrower remit.

This last point may not be immediately clear. However, the ice-rink and the bowls hall were separated by a wall with windows and, the report continues,

> "....*if the bowls hall window were left clear it was considered unlikely that the majority of local bowlers would bowl at Sutton Centre instead of Alfreton.*"

The controls of unaccompanied youth were linked with the separation of the older participants from the sight of the younger. There is no suggestion that different age groups of the same families might be participating:

Thus,

> "*It appears that there is a choice to be made between a Family/Community orientated Recreation Centre and a Youth orientated Leisure Centre.*
>
> *I believe it* (the Sports Centre) *should be orientated mainly towards normal, healthy community recreation use, and not towards treatment, mainly rehabilitation, or mainly education use. This will help towards the development of a total Centre Complex catering for a variety of needs, and so able to serve the massive population which is normal and healthy as well as the minority who are less fortunate.*"

Evidence and opinion had been systematically collected from recreation staff:

> "*The supervisors feel, and I support this feeling, that restrictions are now necessary....children under 16 should not be admitted as spectators unless accompanied by an adult...*"
>
> *...Assistant Recreation Manager (Sports Hall)*

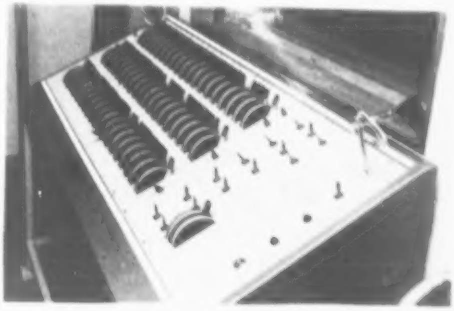
These arguments prevailed, the Joint Sports Centre Management Committee reversed its previous decision and agreed to the banning of under 18-year-old unaccompanied spectators for a probationary period of four months.

The under 18's initiative was a matter internal to the Recreation Section. There was no discussion with other "section heads" and the latter had the surprise of a pain from an unexpected source. For the youth worker would need to explain his belief in the Centre to Bunker members now banned out of the Recreation Centre, unless paying for and busy doing something. The headmaster would be faced with pupils whose school sports area it was during the day-time being banned out - even the sixth form he wanted to create.

The next meeting of the Joint Sports Centre Management Commitee to consider the ban was in September. For the rest of the summer the headmaster and youth leader had to accept that the Recreation Centre's policy and practices were different and in sharp contrast to their own. The long, long wait and the sustained campaign to have the Recreation Centre open had not produced the expected results. Even the signs being put up were a reminder of "monitoring" and "controls" - signs which were actually also within the school during term time.

ENTRANCE FOR
SKATERS ONLY
125 Ice Rink

Nor would the theatre be open until the following September. The wiring was unfinished but no other reason was given. Possibly the repanelling of the ceilings was the cause. Certainly it was this work-in-progress which caused the Bunker to shut for a week for the first time ever. The point is that the campaign to have the Centre open became confused by the conflict over young people which so quickly emerged. The same young people were being so differently described; "*enervated youth*" as compared with "*hordes of kids*".



THEATRE LIGHTING CONTROLS

Sadly, other heads now felt that they would have little influence over both Recreation and its place in the Centre. They felt let down. Sadly, too, the two Assistant Recreation Managers in post felt that they had been ostracised by school and youth service staff. The barriers at Reception became a chromium curtain such that they felt criticised by those who had little knowledge of what they were doing or trying to do. They set out to make a success of the Recreation Centre.

The Sports Hall Manager arranged coaching sessions, club usage at the by now agreed rate (20%) and drafting a squash league. The Ice-Rink Manager did likewise. The Sports Hall and Ice-Rink Managers discussed their strategy and quickly agreed their main tactics. They would improve facilities and equipment and concentrate upon public sessions as first priorities. They built up a list of contacts too and formed friendships. For the time being the Ice-Rink Manager would also be responsible for the Theatre but this was a less pressing matter.

Both Managers said that they would have to actively intervene; to keep changing the programme; to move round the alternatives available. The Ice-Rink Manager was shocked to discover just how much Sutton people had already assumed "user rights". When he reduced one session's duration there were protests and objections. He struck to his decision because it was more fair than had previously been the case. He was also able to prove that the rink was even more popular than before. The shock was over just how pointed and vociferous Sutton people could be about their "rights".

Business in the Sports Hall was building up. The squash "ladder" had more than 60 regulars. Its updating by the Manager meant that players could get a good game by being paired with those whose proficiency was similar to their own. The Carsic Estate produced a gymnastics enthusiast who brought in many young children with him every Saturday morning. The Judo Group had had more recruits through practising at the Centre. A five-a-side league of men from local firms hammered round the Hall whenever they could.

On the Ice-Rink business was booming. "Skating fever" continued throughout the summer unabated. Two freelance coaches were able to make a livelihood. Skate sales increased and a sharpening facility at a nearby garage was introduced. Skaters came regularly, in groups and for miles. A survey in September 1977 showed that the Ice-Rink was already firmly established.[1] The schedule of schools' usage (see Appendix 23) was encouraging young people to become paying participants at other times. The guess that the Ice-Rink would function just as well as a swimming pool had proved correct. Indeed its very popularity had caused the spectator problem which had been such a deep and divisive issue. The lack of spectator facilities shares some of the blame for the division which arose.

Hence this chapter's title then, the Recreation Section was severely set-back by wrangling between the two councils and the Manager resolved his personal tension by regarding the District Council Chief Executive as his Chief Executive. From the outset his style of management and his purposes contrasted with those of the school and youth service in particular. Exciting new developments might have occurred immediately had not the spectator problem led to the banning of the age group which the headmaster and youth leader felt duty bound to defend from blanket criticism and possibly a personal attack. Co-existence became the order of the day.

Until the Recreation Centre opened different activities had been spoken of as parts and those responsible for them as partners.* The long-awaited Recreation Centre was set apart specifically by having to pay its way and generally by its sheer size. The distance was then increased by differences over style.

There was now a spectrum of social attitudes in the Centre. It was no longer an establishment guided, in the main, by a single view of society and social change.

**Where parts had not fitted in easily with the school and youth led philosophy it had not mattered for they were small and could plough their own furrow.*

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: THE EDGES OF SUCCESS.

Not all parts of the Centre have been accounted for yet and nor have the successes and failures been weighed in the balance. 1977 was a vital year in this respect. It was the first year in which all parts were finally together on one site. And it was also the year when the school was forced to move some of its activities out. The "Centrewide" or Common Services, with one exception, failed to materialise. In September 1977, the last parts moved in: Probation; Social Services; Recreation Management and the Registrar occupied the office block between the Ice-Rink and the Day Centre (with the Maths teaching area above).

Amalgamation with Eastbourne and Westbourne increased the staff and pupil numbers to such an extent that both schools had to be maintained as annexes until the lower school unit could be built. Nevertheless the Centre was edging towards success. Indeed there were those who regarded the Centre as an undisputed and established success. On balance there was a catalogue of achievements and an air of hopefulness that more milestones would follow. In particular it was hoped that the Common Services issues could be resolved.

As early as October 1976 the Centre Coordinating Committee had been concerned that a "Building Supervisor" be appointed as soon as possible. The head caretaker was employed as if he were a school caretaker with a few extra duties. Beneath him, however, were three assistant caretakers, four stokers and 17 lady cleaners. There really could be no other school in the county with four stokers! * As it was the evening sessions, lettings and spontaneous happenings added scope to the greatly enlarged size of the head caretaker's responsibility. His job description actually implied that other parts should be entirely responsible for their optional extras. He was not even required to open and close their doors outside of "normal hours". But good nature had prevailed to such an extent that providing the head caretaker knew beforehand, an assistant caretaker would include the "extra" in his round of duties.

There were times when communication failed. Stewart Wilson took most of the bookings for the school himself. Tutors often assumed that they could give access to their group areas whenever they were

---

* Shiftworking for a Centre, two old people's homes and a public baths a quarter of a mile away!

free. On one Saturday in September a coach-load of Derbyshire referees turned up complete with a survival stock of brown ale expecting to occupy the Maths. lecture theatre for the whole day. Whatever the reasons their boisterous presence was the first the assistant caretaker knew about it.(At the time the caretakers met in the sports equipment shop. Their motto was "*we're the last to know in here*".)

The Centre Coordinating Committee wanted to bring some order into the principle of public use. Its members agreed on two rules to be recommended to the combined District and County officers. These were,

1. The head of each section to be responsible for direct negotiation with the groups themselves and/or control over them during use.

2. The Building Supervisor to be responsible for,
   (a) unlocking and locking the appropriate doors.
   (b) requirements relating to the re-arranging and replacement of furniture, transport of any special equipment and general low level security.

In addition a line of approach was put forward by Stewart Wilson to the effect that:

> "*Senior staff on general duty were required to be sympathetic with, and liaise with, unattached people outside or inside the Centre. He felt that once people were engaged in an activity within the Centre they were 'self-generating' and not in need of supervision.*" 1

The Joint Management Services Group reported a different kind of discussion taking place between the two authorities. The top maintenance position, now called Building Superintendent, was one over which the respective officials just could not agree:

> "*The District Council wished the Building Superintendent to report either to the Headmaster or (preferrably) to the Recreation Manager.*"

The County Council thought he should be responsible to both. Secondly the District Council thought that the Building Superintendent should take a turn on its assistant recreation manager's duty rota. The County Council did not.

The result was that the person appointed would be the servant of two masters; he would "report to" two most senior posts who shared most of the Sports Centre between them. Other parts would not have their own caretakers and cleaners whilst the Sports Centre would have "service operatives" and "Education" would have "assistant caretakers" (with blue or green boiler suits respectively). The heads of the other parts assumed that they would have direct access and the right of demand. Within two weeks the newly appointed Building Superintendent was to ask the Coordinating Committee *"Please, don't send me any more bits of paper!"*

Cleaners were to work either for Recreation or for Education and be paid at different rates. There were four anxious weeks when the caretakers thought that they would be sacked and have to reapply for their "own jobs". They and the cleaners had, by and large, come to terms with the openness and informality and had actually made up the details of development whenever they seemed necessary. It was a real shock to find that Stewart Wilson, concerned as he was, no longer had the power which he had exercised for the three previous years.

Catering and the bars were not going to be as the Feasibility Study had recommended. At first the School Dinner Service provided meals for pupils, staff and day centre members only. Then a Catering Manager was appointed in anticipation of a full-size school, all other parts open and the public being able to buy snacks or meals at all times.

The Catering Manager had been full of proposals - and had rarely had the chance to show his flair. Just once, in January 1977, he had provided top quality low-cost food for a weekend conference of 120 people (and it's funny how long people remember good food!). In June he left within a day of making up his mind. He said:

> *"I'm chocka. They can't decide if its a social service or should break even or if its a 5-day or 7-day week. I've been here two years and its gone on like that. But nothing's clearer now. You write reports and they are accepted and then no staff or money are allocated. I'm not going to anything: but I am going as soon as I can!"*

(In the same month three assistant caretakers made hasty exits too)

Neither the dining hall nor the servery were opened for hot drinks and snacks in the evenings or at weekends. Instead 'Recreation' installed vending machines in the servery and ice-rink. The ice-rink snack bar was opened - but only for ice rink users.

IT IS REGRETED THAT BY
LAW PERSONS UNDER THE
AGE OF 16 ARE NOT ALLOWED
INTO THIS BAR AREA

Nor was a bar manager appointed. The District Council decided to lease the bars to a private company who then hired their own staff, set their own prices and provided rolls and sandwiches at dinner-time. Even though the kitchen facilities had been installed so that many meals could be prepared at all times their use was to remain at the reduced level of a school dinner-time service.

Nor did the crèche (childrens' room) open in the way which was intended. The Joint Management Services Report had commented upon the difficulties:-

> *"Until both authorities have clearly defined their intentions as to the objectives, purposes and functions that will be required it is not possible to determine the anticipated staff and requirements for the space."*

Nevertheless a staffing formula had been applied, the problems of which were, who would pay for the four staff and one-hundred and fifty hours (the estimate of what was needed for fifty children) and to whom they would be responsible. The Crèche was intended to serve the Centre as a whole. Benefitting the whole and the public at large was a "*goal*" for which the means of achievement could not be found. When confronted with a space which could not be partitioned it was decided to recommend that the "*créche/childrens' room should not become operational immediately the Sports Centre is opened until the demand could be more accurately judged.*" A more straight-forward way of putting this was that the créche would remain closed for the forseeable future.

And yet the créche opened almost as soon as the space was available. The school fund gave £50 to buy equipment and Home Management staff and senior pupils joined with mothers and their young children on three afternoons each week. The créche opened because the school extended its activities into the area.

Then, as it was in use, Recreation let out the space for children's parties and drama group rehearsals. There were no official staff and the ad hoc arrangement produced points of conflict. In particular could children's parties use the créche equipment or not? Did the créche have to be cleaned each time of all traces of its activity in case there was a letting? What power did the Recreation Manager or Head have over the créche? A way had been found over the problems of getting it open and a fresh set of problems created for which neither authority had any experience upon which to draw. So much depended upon internal relationships and then the créche was but one of many issues.

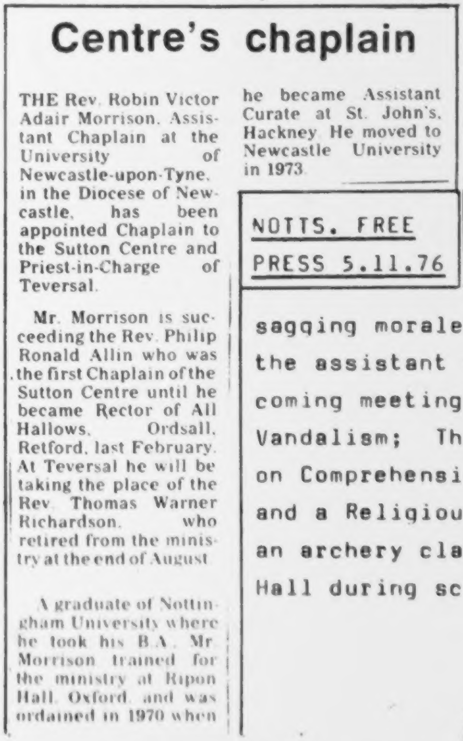
In sharp contrast, though, to the indeterminacy Common Services were the valiant efforts at integration made by the smallest 'parts' of all. These 'parts' were the one-person functions of School

Nurse and Centre Chaplain.

The Nurse was based in a surgery next to the crèche. She attracted small groups of loyal pupils who hoped to "*help*" and regularly confided in her. She taught in Personal Relationships and attended to any injury or sickness whilst she was on duty. Staff and Day Centre members sought her advice. The ice-rink's early days brought a flood of cuts and bruises. She discussed with tutors those pupils whom she considered to be getting insufficient food or sleep. She was another member of staff who dressed according to personal taste and appeared to know everyone.

The Chaplain was the second in post. In 1974 the Church of England had seconded a rector from St. Mary's Church but when he left for his own parish a unique arrangement had been arrived at. The Chaplain of Sutton Centre would have the "*living*" of Teversal. The "*living*" would provide a Vicar's salary and the Parsonage in which to live. Teversal is a small village with some 1,500 people close by. The village itself has had any development around the medieval church held in check by the "Lord of the Manor". Teversal parish was small enough to allow its incumbent to become involved in Sutton Centre.

The second Vicar, Robin Morrison, was young, forceful and political. He devoted most of his energies to Sutton Centre. His initiatives included forming a Staff Club, editing a magazine called "Centrewide" and holding meetings calculated to challenge "unthinking complacency" wherever it might occur. He wrote to the Director of Education on the sagging morale of the Building Superintendent and the assistant caretakers. His programme of forthcoming meetings for Autumn 1977 had as its topics; Vandalism; The Third World; An Education Debate on Comprehensives; East-West Relations; Abortion and a Religious Debate on Ressurection. He held an archery class for the disabled using the Sports Hall during school-time. The Chaplain made his



Centre's chaplain

THE Rev. Robin Victor Adair Morrison, Assistant Chaplain at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, in the Diocese of Newcastle, has been appointed Chaplain to the Sutton Centre and Priest-in-Charge of Teversal.

Mr. Morrison is succeeding the Rev. Philip Ronald Allin who was the first Chaplain of the Sutton Centre until he became Rector of All Hallows, Ordsall, Retford, last February. At Teversal he will be taking the place of the Rev. Thomas Warner Richardson, who retired from the ministry at the end of August.

A graduate of Nottingham University where he took his B.A., Mr. Morrison trained for the ministry at Ripon Hall, Oxford, and was ordained in 1970 when he became Assistant Curate at St. John's, Hackney. He moved to Newcastle University in 1973.

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own contribution to catering with bread and cheese lunches (in the Teachers' Centre) during Christian Aid Week. He proposed to his team that a theme for the for the following year could be "Whose Jubilee?". The concluding paragraph of the proposal said:-

> "*The Queen's Silver Jubilee gives us an opportunity to put before people an alternative celebration - of the aspirations and needs of people in the country, and for the raising of questions about injustices and about the unwillingness to hear certain truths about our society. We are conscious of all those groups who have little to be glad about in the reign of twenty-five years - the old, the immigrants, the rootless young, the handicapped, the homeless, the prisoners, the mentally ill, and all the victims of our institutions. With these people also we have a more profound joy and a better cause for celebration. And they have their truth to tell.*"

Above all, then, the Chaplain made his position clear. His notes on tutor group time topics stressed his support for the school. In another circular he proposed that one dimension of his ministry was the theology of affirmation which included: "*celebrating the Centre's concerns and achievements and hopes...in particular signs of new kinds of relationships.*" Under the title "Rowdies Banned from the Sutton Centre: some personal reflections" he wrote:-

> "*One of the major struggles of community education programmes and community centre provision throughout the country is the avoidance of any elitist implications in its service of local needs. What seems to me crucial is that we do more than is usually done to avoid this by the style and content of everything that happens in this building and within each section of it*". (See Appendix 25)

The Chaplain tried above all to pull staff, whatever their part, together. He became secretary of the Centre Coordinating Committee and corresponded vigorously in this capacity. Still, there were no funds for his work in the Centre from the Church, the Ministers' Fraternal or the two Councils. The school gave office space, secretarial and printing support and other parts' secretaries typed for the Chaplain too. Even though he took being Centre Chaplain as his full-time job he had to beg for everything necessary for him to do it. Without doubt he derived support for his beliefs. Indeed in his booklet "Liturgy and Politics" the Chaplain thanked "*the staff of Sutton Centre for their inspiration*".

The sources of inspiration were the feeling of having sufficient resources at one's fingertips, the open and ethical way in which disputes were handled and the constant surprises which cooperative ventures could cause.

Coexistence was developing into mutual benefit. Unofficial deals between the Sports Hall Manager and the Sports and Leisure Course Director provided squash courts for pupils and five-a-side football areas in the evening in return for day-time badminton courts for the paying public. During the suspended week in the summer of 1977 most of the Sports Hall was available most of the time for public use. Equipment was borrowed back and forth. A consignment of track-suits with Sutton Centre printed on the chest was "*bought*" and sold by both men.. The Sports Hall Manager said,

> "*...we have to get on with one another, we can't afford not to. For example he doesn't hang onto the hall until 5.00p.m. if he doesn't need it and I let him know if there's a spare squash court during the day so he can nip in and teach some kids. It's commonsense not to grab every penny. Anyway you make more money that way!*"

Elsewhere the Ice-Rink manager was testing the proficiency of school pupils during his and their lunchtime.

Cooperation was also used to untangle some knotty problems. Block 3B, for example, had the problem of two floors being "*the wrong way round*". The ground floor was the youth service's drop-in coffee bar and disco. Above this were the offices, coffee bar and teaching areas of adult literacy; Workers' Education Association; university resident extra mural tutor, youth tutor, and research. On the second floor were the teachers' centre and warden's office, printing equipment and technician, communications and resources control and equipment, secretary, darkroom and four large teaching spaces. Sandwiched between the joyful sounds of youth above and below were sometimes tetchy adults and their teachers. Visiting university tutors sent record requests to the youth club whilst the off-set litho. machine bumped along above them. Those responsible for adult education exchanged grumbles; they had no common programme but they did have a common problem.

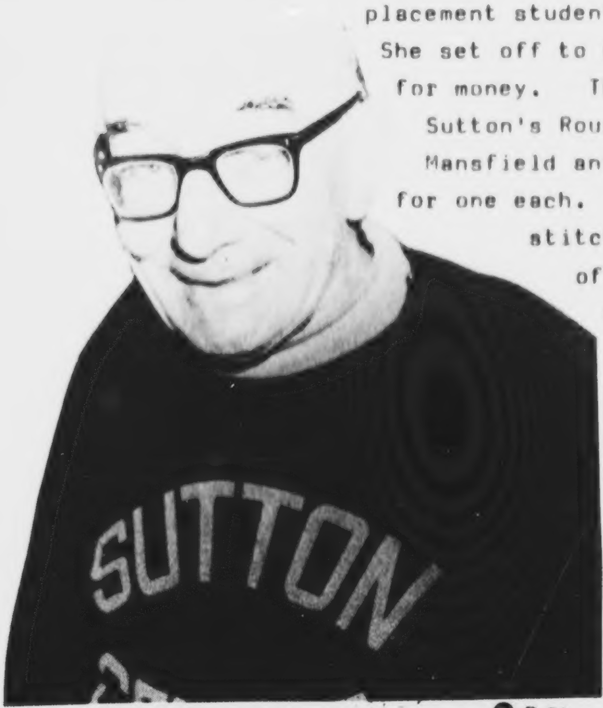
The researcher became chairman of the Adult Education Committee which he formed. In this capacity he explored the possibility of a complete exchange of floors. To his amazement the school Course Director thought that it should be done because he knew the suffering to which adult education was put. The original plans were consulted: the architects had actually sited adult education on the top floor and an adult/sixth form were to be beneath. The floors, however, had been filled as they had become available and by those who had already arrived.

Then each organiser had to agree to a switch of floors and everyone did. The researcher drew up a plan by which all furniture and fittings could go up either staircase; rooms could be transit depots and the whole operation could be complete - apart from installing a sink and boarding a darkroom - in three days. It was clear that the majority interest, the school, would be disturbed the most and be left without some facilities it then enjoyed. The adult educators' different employers were approached to contribute towards the school's costs and petty cash was put aside. Then the headmaster was told and agreed. Within a week of his accepting the plan, the exchange of floors was completed and the Adult Education Committee was scheduling the use of its flooor teaching areas so that the school could use them when vacant. The committee continued to meet and was enlarged to include the Deputy Head (Community) and the Sports Hall Manager who was about to launch recreation courses that Autumn.

The newcomers, Social Services and Probation sent their Heads to the Centre Coordinating Committee. They had been led to believe that cooperation was expected. Cooperation means more than deals and exchanges be they worthy or sensible or both. It also refers to the way relationships weave together so that both the person's job and their own personal qualities are mobilised. Once mobilised what happens next can come as a surprise. The folk night for Neil Keightley shows what cooperation involved at Sutton Centre. In March 1977 a fourteen-year-old boy was playing foolishly around empty coalwagons in a pit siding. He was on private property and hitching rides. He fell and a wagon ran over his legs; a likeable lad would be in a wheelchair for the rest of his life. Yet the story caught people's sympathy even though they knew it was his fault. A fund was set up to help him. Charlie Ellis, Sutton's marathon walker and regular ally of the school and Bunker set off to raise £200.

Veteran walker Mr. Charlie Ellis shakes hands with Neil after completing a sponsored walk which realised more than £220 towards the fund to send Neil to America.

At the same time the Sports Hall had become available to the public and "*the public*" included all disabled people. Part of the school's scheduled time was given over to Day Centre members and they played wheelchair basket-ball. Few abled-bodied people are capable of playing wheelchair basket-ball for long because the chairs are so heavy. The Youth Leader, played in a match against nearby Portland Training College and was quickly convinced of the need for sports wheelchairs. The idea grew into fund-raising proposals and was little more than hopeful noises when Sally Woolard, a placement student from Leicester Polytechnic arrived. She set off to ask local voluntary organisations for money. The response was overwhelming. Sutton's Round Table and Inner Wheel and Mansfield and District's Trades Council paid for one each. The ladies of the Inner Wheel stitched a tapestry panel on the back of their gift like a park-seat plaque!



CHARLIE ELLIS

The disabled flew about the Sports Hall, crashed into each other and the walls. They pushed their aid to the very limits of its endurance and seemed incapable of being hurt themselves. The near spontaneous generosity had brought the possibility of fielding a full-time team of four spirited players. So far ther were three wheelchairs.

Neil Keightley had been invited to try out a chair. As he picked up confidence in his charges round the Sports Hall he began to sing. He had a good clear voice and the acoustic panels helped it along. John Clayton had the idea that he could: sing for his supper; sing for the chair he sat in; begin a career as a singer at a folk night for a chair.

Sally Woolard set about organising a folk night for the final wheelchair. Frank Butler, landlord of the Denmans Head Hotel said the backroom could be used free as it was for charity. Bob Walker, the Area Youth Officer, was a keen folk singer and would perform with wife and friends. The posters were designed and printed in a Communications and Resources' eleventh session. The children and adults working on the posters got interested and took some to put up themselves. Most of the ticket distribution was handled by school teachers who had scratched a band together and were practising three 'numbers' in the music block. Bunker 'kids' took tickets too. They would share the responsibility for door duties with some Bunker part-time youth workers (some of whom were also parents of Centre school-children). The word spread and whilst some seriously rehearsed others looked forward to a laugh.

Sally took charge of the running order. Bob Walker had brought three accomplished folk singers. They sang from one to another with a practiced air. Up jumped the local Oxfam organiser who said unkind things about "*wounded bagpipes*" and "*four sweaters singing about a dead sailor*" and then launched into a bouncy, bawdy song. The Centre school teachers' band had been stretched to include two young women doing eleventh sessions. They announced that they would sing Beatles songs which threw the night wide open; the folk night was becoming a people's festival. Neil Keightley was accompanied on the piano, and in velvet jacket and bow tie he sang Sinatra ballads with loads of enriching echo. Every act had so far been tuneful!

Mel was next, he joked about coming from Huthwaite and thanked his family for making sure he'd got to the Denmans. There was a table of eleven people towards the back of the gloom. Grandma and Uncles, Cousins and Mam and Dad had all come to see their Mel perform. He joked and sang for half-an-hour and two standing ovations. Grandma looked really pleased. Mel was the hit of the night even though one of its purposes had been to launch Neil Keightley. It didn't matter much to Neil as he already had an agent and autographed photographs. True, it was his first performance but he had a string of bookings for local clubs; enough to last him the rest of the year. The tickets, the raffle (and all those tickets bought by those unable to come) raised enough to buy the final wheelchair.

By the end of the evening everyone wanted more. The table of handicapped people from the Day Centre cheered and clapped for ages. Someone suggested that a folk club be formed and there were more cheers. A month later the first folk club meeting was held at the Victoria Hotel, Stanton Hill. Most people sang and towards the end of the evening a club membership and entrance fee was suggested.

Neil Keightley presented a signed photograph to the Bunker and called in with his girlfriend sometimes. He was always available for a fund-raising evening.

The Folk Night was not an isolated incident; there were many moments of fruition which had even more complicated stories attached to them. Just before Christmas 1976 a new 'bus was bought. Its purpose was explicitly extended to serving community groups. There would be resentment from local coach operators perhaps but one operator had helped pick the coach and his garage would service it. Running one community 'bus was not going to put all the local fleets at risk. (see cutting over)

In 1977 two farm projects were made public: the Bunker farm and the town centre farm and both attracted a lot of interest. And as if to symbolise the public becoming well and truly established in the Centre S.C.U.A.*took over its own space in the school and produced the first issue of its Newspaper "Outlook". (see over)

* *Sutton Centre Users' Association.*

NEW COACH FOR CENTRE

Notts. Free Press 17.12.76.

Reward for a year's work

SUTTON Centre last week extended their horizons when they paid nearly £2,000 for a 45 seater coach.

A whole year of jumble sales, Christmas draws, a summer fete and the latest Spellabus' competition at the school helped raise the money, but it didn't take the school council too long to decide on having the bus — just one afternoon.

Local bus companies helped and advised Paul Mortimer and John Clayton with choosing a suitable coach.

It is hoped the bus will be used not only by the Centre but the youth club and other associated clubs and organisations in the area for sporting activities, environmental studies and also carrying disabled people and other school children, when available.

Cooperation, though, was only the most obvious description of relationships. To begin at the beginning, most staff had the calibre to do their job and to take on something extra - Leisure attendants, teachers, secretaries, caterers and cleaners. The Youth Service was the best at elbowing out those who did not fit, those who wanted to be boss of their own domain; those who demanded "respect" without realising that they had to earn it; those whose hostility to certain "*types*" of people meant that they hardly ever knew or thought about individuals. Those who openly liked people were in the majority.

In this respect Sutton Centre was on the offensive. The outward-going curriculum of the school was bound to lead to confrontations no matter how delicately and humorously handled. A letter from the Environmental Studies suspended week visit to Hardwick Hall could be read by progressives as mild good humour and by traditionals as poking fun at those in authority.

The point is that the innovators had the edge. They went out around the town, promoted contact with townspeople and could handle the frustrated anger of those who thought they should be back in school.

Christmas 1976 had seen the Precinct used as a theatre, a music hall and a practical maths. shop (under the heading "metrication"). They weighed and measured the shoppers and their purchases. Education had gone beyond the market place into the high rate paying wind-tunnels of the Precinct. The merchants objected to the crowds but this kind of criticism was water off a duck's back; confrontation in *"the market place"* went on. Nationally and internationally the *"school side"* was a shining success. Harry Rée's article in the Architect's Journal[2] showed the school's success in *"projecting its image"*. Neither the exceptional success of the school nor the accuracy of Harry Rée's observations could be denied. In February 1977 he had spent a week at the Centre filming Programme 13 of the B.B.C.'s "Great Education Debate" series. (Stewart Wilson's memorandum 13 of January 1977 helped to show the combination of creativity, self-criticism and social criticism which was being achieved - see Appendix 26).

Sutton-in-Ashfield was national news that Spring. David Marquand, M.P. for Ashfield, had resigned. Television reporters, having combed the towns and villages, consistently pictured the area as a fossil of the Edwardian era. The terraced houses of Annesley became a favourite shot. The broad accents of Ashfield seemed to make a Labour victory a foregone conclusion. The Conservative candidate was a public school educated accountant, a 30-year-old bachelor from London.

The W.E.A. miners' class was almost the only opinion poll to predict a Labour defeat. But a 20,000 Labour majority was erased and Tim Smith became M.P. All kinds of reasons were advanced, a low poll, a government in mid-term unpopularity, a Labour candidate who was not a N.U.M. man (National Union of Mineworkers) and so on. Whatever the reasons were, the press stayed to account for the shock defeat. Tim Smith, for his part showed an interest in the school and the Youth Service in particular. Sutton's townspeople had all three aspects of media treatment upon which to ponder, "*a showpiece comprehensive*", a young Tory M.P. and being portrayed as Coronation Street across the Pennines.

There were, quite naturally, themes upon which the media did not expand. These themes were what had made the school work so far [3] and what would happen to it next. In day-to-day life there was very little passing along the line of problems; things were sorted out between the subject teacher and the pupil's tutor. Secondly there was the almost suicidal involvement of the Management Team. All three deputies had heavy teaching loads and a tutor group - the assistant teachers were not given the heaviest burden. Furthermore, there was such trust in and concern for the Management Team that the staff proposed a working party to help them with general administration. The staff could see the overwork of the Head and Deputies.

Finally being able to see each other at work was very important. The open-plan layout played a significant part in the creation of "*community*" within the school. The staff were "*exposed*" to their colleagues, to constant analysis right down to the very words spoken. The private, locked door institutional feeling was totally removed.

Now amalgamation with other secondary schools was drawing close.

The logistics of how to integrate their pupils and staff into the tutor system and the curriculum had to be faced. Just as serious would be the need to 'bus children across town to old, closed-room buildings whose fabric was ingrained with the history of a different approach. Faced with the unenviable choice of basing a particular year group at annexes or bussing some pupils from each year to and fro Centre theory triumphed over lessons learnt from practical experience elsewhere. The school would have serious obstacles of its own, it would be pre-occupied with its inner consistencies whatever the commitment to connections being made at the Centre and with feeder primary schools. The Theatre, for example, was still not yet *'open'*.

The stream of national and international visitors increased dramatically that summer. The governing body at its last meeting before the May County Council elections had suggested that a visitor's book be started.

The County Council elections had followed Ashfield's example, so to speak. The Conservatives now had a strong majority and were returned as a promise to "*clamp down on expenditure*". All the same it looked, in July, as if Sutton Centre would have the support of the newly elected Conservatives. The Chairman of the Education Committee and the Director of Education visited with six London-based correspondents of foreign newspapers. The Notts. Free Press on the 8th July 1977 proudly told its readers that "*the experimental education programme at Sutton Centre is likely to be read about in homes as far afield as Switzerland, West Germany, Denmark and Australia*". The bad feeling caused by the delay in opening the Recreation Area seemed to have been forgotten.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: RECREATION 1977-80.

Recreation had gone its own way under its own terms. The key question is how effective was it in meeting its own criteria? The aim was, remember, to be a family sports focus for Ashfield District.

The style chosen was to have coaching sessions, regular club users and open public sessions with access by telephone bookings or taking 'pot luck'. The facility was to be run like a self-service cafeteria, namely, management prepared a menu of separate dishes which the customers consumed and combined as they wished. Each assistant manager was to promote his area and its activities within this general framework. There were two major consequences of the overall approach. First the assistant managers developed distinctive styles and achieved varied results. Secondly leisure events, like dances and theatrical performances, literally fell out of the scope of the aims. Most of this chapter will therefore examine the evidence relating to the aims which the Recreation Manager put forward. There was, after all, no competition in the town and many Suttonians had seen nothing like it before. Every booking was in some way significant and so every recorded booking from February 1977 to February 1980 was analysed.

Floor Sports and the Sports Hall.

The floor sports areas were the three squash courts, the multi-purpose hall and the practice area which could hold four table-tennis tables. The hall and the practice area were like stage sets with scenery suspended from the roof above. According to plan and public demand nets or baskets could be lowered. The sports hall floor looked like the terminus of different coloured tram tracks. The question of floor sports comes in two parts: first what were the *"participation rates"* for squash, badminton and table-tennis because these are the least specialised sports and an easy use of the floor areas? Secondly what were the participation rates in activities like trampoline and archery? For it was in its height, heating and equipment that Sutton Centre was a cut above the neighbourhood's church halls and huts on the Lammas. Hopefully paying participation rates would, after an opening rush, steady at a rate which would make sense in terms of staffing and other investments. Then the competing interests of staple fare and specialised sports would have to be balanced. Squash was the only exception to this rule.

There would be 420 bookings per week if the squash courts were used continuously. In the first year the courts were used nearly all the time; morning, noon and night. The only significant dips occurred when there were public holidays or when the Centre was closed for two days at Christmas. Even so squash playing continued right up to the holidays and began again as soon as they were over! The afternoon period had the greatest consistency and also had the closest approximation to maximum use.

The Sports Hall Manager put zest into playing by compiling a squash ladder. New players entered at the bottom and were paired with players higher up until they lost. Each player could then expect a close match - except the Hall Manager himself who was the top player month after month!

The demand was much greater than the supply, and complaints became so loud that the Recreation Manager, in a newspaper interview, regretted the frustration and disappointment and said that the situation affected him, too, as his own daughter was often unable to get a game. The problem became so pressing that a more detailed analysis of one month's bookings was made. The results revealed that some enthusiasts sought to play at least twice a week or even once a day if they could. There were three ways of ensuring a lion's share. Some individuals block booked courts for six days in advance. One leisure attendant block booked courts and sub-let. Three commercial premises were block booking courts at dinner-time by jamming the external lines until they had what they wanted. The trick was at 9.25a.m. all ten lines in the offices would be used by determined players. All but one then dialled the first four digits of the Sutton Centre booking number. After a booking had been made all then dialled the last digit in turn. By block booking (on all three methods) over a quarter of available time was occupied by a handful of people.

After circulation of these findings block bookings were raised at a meeting of the Joint Sports Centre Management Committee. Receptionists were then told to allow only one court per telephone call (which allowed the commercial premises to continue undeterred as their technique did use a different surname for each single booking).

From the middle of 1978, squash bookings began to decline. The Sports Hall Manager left to become a professional squash coach and his replacement chose not to collect slips of paper from players and so keep the ladder up-to-date. More squash courts were being built in the area too. Mansfield Brewery opened "Sutton Squash Club" in Skegby. Mansfield District Council's new Leisure Centre had three courts. After three years Sutton Centre's courts had settled at 80% usage in January 1980.

The more recently built courts were also more *"up market"* with glass viewing walls and plush bars. The high cost of annual membership (£30) helped to keep the Sutton Club exclusive and encouraged members to attend regularly and get their money's worth. Middle-class Mansfield and Sutton was partly creamed off. But that only released Sutton Centre's courts for others in general and novices in particular. Yet as squash had been largely self-managed from the beginning - although the first Manager's ladder effectively made a club out of all usage - the increasing slack went unnoticed. Perhaps, even, the squash ladder and coaching sessions had been directly responsible for 1/5 of the total *'business'*? Whatever the reason, or reasons, there was no reaction and the takings of the 'guaranteed' money spinner slipped.

Badminton bookings declined too,[1] in roughly the same proportions. The total per year dropped by 1/5 from first to third year (see Table 1.)

TABLE 1.

BADMINTON	YEAR 1.	YEAR 2.	YEAR 3.
Total bookings	10,383	9,001	8,302

The downward trend was consistent in the weekly averages for holiday weeks alike [2] (see Table 2).

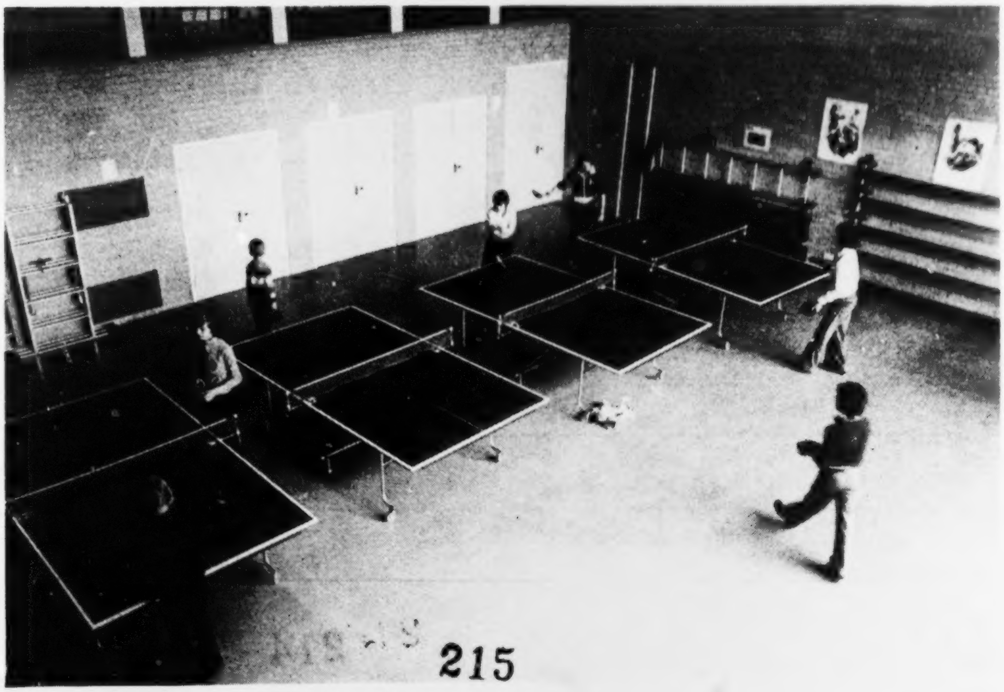
TABLE 2.

AVERAGE BADMINTON BOOKINGS PER WEEK	YEAR 1.	YEAR 2.	YEAR 3.
HOLIDAY	245	221	201
WHOLE YEAR	199	176	159
NON-HOLIDAY	182	157	145

Table-tennis booking also reduced by about 20% (see Table 3).

TABLE-TENNIS	YEAR 1.	YEAR 2.	YEAR 3.
Total bookings	5,085	4,571	4,138

The declines in badminton and table-tennis were serious because they were sports which closely fitted the image of family participation. Squash was largely played by two men in their middle years and just as often coming from Mansfield as from Sutton.



Badminton and table-tennis did draw parents with their children. The equipment was not costly. And for company there were usually intense young men and groups of relaxed senior couples who played with laughs and smiles.

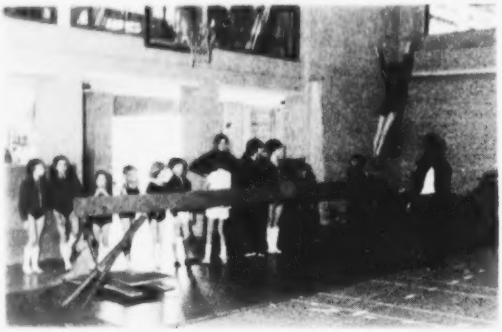
All the same if the decline was due to a displacement by other family activities then presumably there was nothing actually amiss. The first Sports Hall Manager had developed a formula for the possible permutations of space usage, which had a badminton court as its basic unit rather than its central purpose. The formula was as follows:-

Four table-tennis courts equal → one badminton court
Two trampoline equal → one badminton court
Three badminton courts equal → one volley ball court
Four badminton courts equal → one cricket net
and
one archery
or
five-a-side pitch
or
netball pitch
Five badminton courts equal → one tennis court
Six badminton courts equal → one hall

In 1979/80 thirteen private clubs, seven of which were badminton clubs,used the main sports hall on a regular weekly, or twice weekly basis. In addition league programmes for 5-a-side football were run at weekends and matches were also held during the week. Clubs could "*block hire*" several months at a time, for which facility there was no extra charge and they paid weekly in advance.

The Centre also organised courses in badminton, ladies' slim and trim, judo, gymnastics and weight-training. Courses normally ran for six weeks at a time with a fortnight's interval to allow for subscription. Gymnastics and weight-training courses were conducted on a casual '*pay at the door*' basis.

In the weeks of 1979/80 club and course usage accounted for nearly 30% of the time. The time taken from public availability was often prime time; that is 7p.m. to 9p.m. in the evening. Even so if the club and course activities fulfilled the family promise then there would have been a fair exchange. Stretching the concept of family a little, the question becomes which clubs and courses had young people - teenagers - learning alongside adults? The answer is all, including Badminton and Five-a-Side, with Weight-training and Gymnastics, had a high proportion of young devotees. And whilst the membership and attendance of clubs remained of the same level each year weight_training and gymnastics had contrasting popularity.



Perhaps it is necessary to review the threads which have been woven into the account so far. First were there actually *'family sports'* in the sense of parents and children playing together? The answer has been yes sometimes with badminton and table-tennis. Then it was noted that both these had declined in bookings by 20%. But this could be displacement by equally family-type clubs and courses. However, much of the space went to adults only - typically small badminton clubs with an unchanging membership. Judo, gymnastics and weight-training were different. Parents sent their children to these open courses. Courses with open access at least let young people in: girls to gymnastics and boys to weight training. Clubs could crowd out potential playing families and in the case of badminton that is what probably happened.

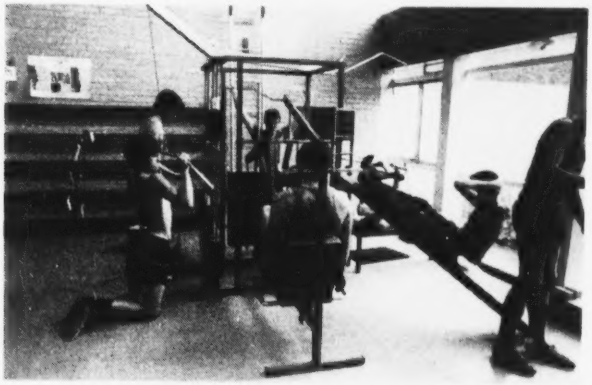
There was, then, a *'trade-off'* in the table-tennis area as club usage occupied 42 of the possible 153 bookings in the table-tennis area.

Both gymnastics attendances dropped by over 50% in the three years (see Table 4).

TABLE 4.

AVERAGE GYMNASTIC ATTENDANCES	YEAR 1.	YEAR 2.	YEAR 3.
HOLIDAY	80	54	22
WHOLE YEAR	118	74	49
NON-HOLIDAY	114	80	54
TOTALS	6,003	3,839	2,387

In contrast to the drop in bookings which occurred in badminton, table-tennis and gymnastics the figures for weight training significantly increased, the total for 'year three' being almost double that for 'year one'. As with gymnastics weight training was more popular during term time than the school holidays which shows the combined effect of having a school on the doorstep and the norm of children learning day and night during term time and having the holidays off!



The weight training success begs some further detail as it was produced by a departure from the cafeteria model (see Table 5).

TABLE 5.

AVERAGE WEIGHT TRAINING ATTD.	YEAR 1.	YEAR 2.	YEAR 3.
HOLIDAY	34	35	65
WHOLE YEAR	46	46	89
NON-HOLIDAY	50	50	92
TOTALS	2,392	2,404	4,383

The Building Superintendent appointed in 1977 was a weight training enthusiast. He found the pieces of a multi-gym in store and assembled them. He first attracted his friends, then local football team players exercising to overcome injuries and then, as he put it, "*rough lads who want biceps that pull the birds*". The word got around each of the last two networks that there was personal attention as a reward for "*hard graft*". Quite frankly, too, it was hard to image anyone picking a fight with the instructor. Being both Building Superintendent and Instructor producing increasing revenue he badgered Management for more equipment and that gave his course members new steel springs to grapple with. Metaphorically speaking the menu was added to which enabled a more varied session and more people to be able to work out for a whole session. (There was a direct cost because the available table-tennis tables were reduced to three after a player collided with the sharp and solid multi-gym).

Finally, given the general decline in public bookings there is the question of whether or not club bookings compensated for this by literally filling up the space and, in that limited sense, thus maximizing usage. There is a simple method of calculating total usage: Club space bookings can be added to public space bookings and expressed as a percentage of the total available. For the Sports Hall in the third year the figure is:-

$$\frac{\text{Club Bookings} + \text{Average Booking Figure}}{\text{Total possible bookings in a school week}}$$

$$= \text{'s} \quad \frac{95 + 146}{306} \times \frac{100}{1} = \text{'s} \quad 79\% \text{ usage.}$$ [4]

For the Practice Area (Table-tennis courts plus a multi-gym) the figure is:-

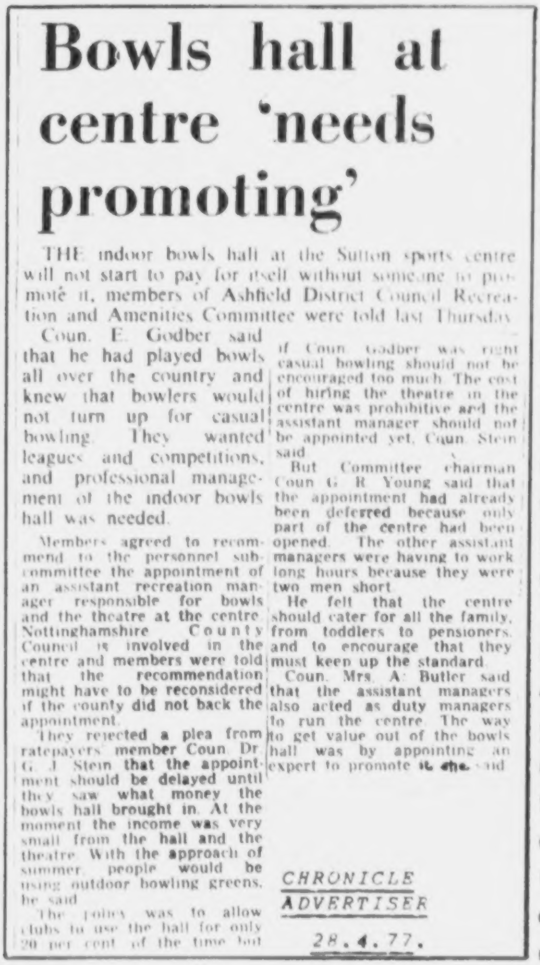
$$= \text{'s} \quad \frac{42 + 80}{153} \times \frac{100}{1} = \text{'s} \quad 73\% \text{ usage.}$$

There were all manner of responses to what could be seen with the naked eye. If Clubs had taken the same proportions but at less popular times then more public and family playing may have been stimulated. There was a press upon popular times and a slack at others. By following the cafeteria model the overall decline was not reversed.

Weight training went in the reverse direction though, that is the Instructor managed his resources and extended them as both stimulus for and response to demand.

One possibility overlooked by researching the principle of *'a family/ homely Centre"* to the letter is that a family structure might be found throughout the Centre as a whole rather than engaged in each specific sport. Certainly bowls provision was intended for more senior citizens; the grandparents, as it were, of children elsewhere. Ashfield District Council had specifically wanted an indoor bowls hall - quite probably with an eye to its ageing population. (Even in 1971 Ashfields over 65's totalled 3% more than the 11% national average and would *bulge* to 18% by the 1990's). 'Bowlers' included councillors and council officials to such an extent that they were the most vociferous sporting interest group before the Centre was built. The aim was to provide an extensive winter league with a set of fixtures just as comprehensive as the summer season. Summer playing had a time honoured rhythm, beginning after lunch and playing *"sides and diagonals"* through tea-time until the last rays of the cooling sun had left the green. Bowls players aid their blood circulation by waiting until the day is warm and continuing until there is no warmth left to take. These were, then, ingredients which the bowls establishment were wanting to add to Sutton Centre.

The delay in opening brought protests over jeopardizing winter leagues. Within two months of opening the appropriate Ashfield District Council had agreed to appoint an expert to promote the bowls hall. In support of a Bowls Manager Councillor Godber said he *"knew that bowlers would not turn up for casual bowling, they wanted leagues and competitions"*. The leagues were already formed. From Tuesday to Friday evening in the first week of opening three rinks were given over to Ashfield's four divisions. The team's names read like a thumbnail sketch of the District (see Appendix 27). Forty-eight teams took to the felt green just as soon as they could.



Bowls hall at centre 'needs promoting'

THE indoor bowls hall at the Sutton sports centre will not start to pay for itself without someone to promote it, members of Ashfield District Council Recreation and Amenities Committee were told last Thursday.

Coun. E. Godber said that he had played bowls all over the country and knew that bowlers would not turn up for casual bowling. They wanted leagues and competitions, and professional management of the indoor bowls hall was needed.

Members agreed to recommend to the personnel sub-committee the appointment of an assistant recreation manager responsible for bowls and the theatre at the centre. Nottinghamshire County Council is involved in the centre and members were told that the recommendation might have to be reconsidered if the county did not back the appointment.

They rejected a plea from ratepayers' member Coun. Dr. G. J. Stein that the appointment should be delayed until they saw what money the bowls hall brought in. At the moment the income was very small from the hall and the theatre. With the approach of summer, people would be using outdoor bowling greens, he said.

The policy was to allow clubs to use the hall for only 20 per cent of the time but if Coun. Godber was right casual bowling should not be encouraged too much. The cost of hiring the theatre in the centre was prohibitive and the assistant manager should not be appointed yet, Coun. Stein said.

But Committee chairman Coun. G. R. Young said that the appointment had already been deferred because only part of the centre had been opened. The other assistant managers were having to work long hours because they were two men short.

He felt that the centre should cater for all the family, from toddlers to pensioners, and to encourage that they must keep up the standard.

Coun. Mrs. A. Butler said that the assistant managers also acted as duty managers to run the centre. The way to get value out of the bowls hall was by appointing an expert to promote it, she said.

CHRONICLE ADVERTISER

28.4.77.

Indeed casual bowling began in earnest too. Most players met in the afternoon, there were fewer in the evening and very few in the morning. But from May to July the bowlers returned to the privet hedges and club huts of their outdoor greens. Then a slow and steady return to the Bowls Hall built up between August and September. From October onwards there was winter playing of a similar pattern to that of the previous March (see Graph 2)

Casual bowls amounted to over 4,000 bookings in the first year of which two-thirds were almost certainly made by Sutton people. An analysis was made of where the players came from. The detail was simple, each telephone booking included noting a telephone number - not least as a check upon those who bagged a place but then failed to turn up. Bowls players did not travel far, nor did they telephone early as often as players of other sports.

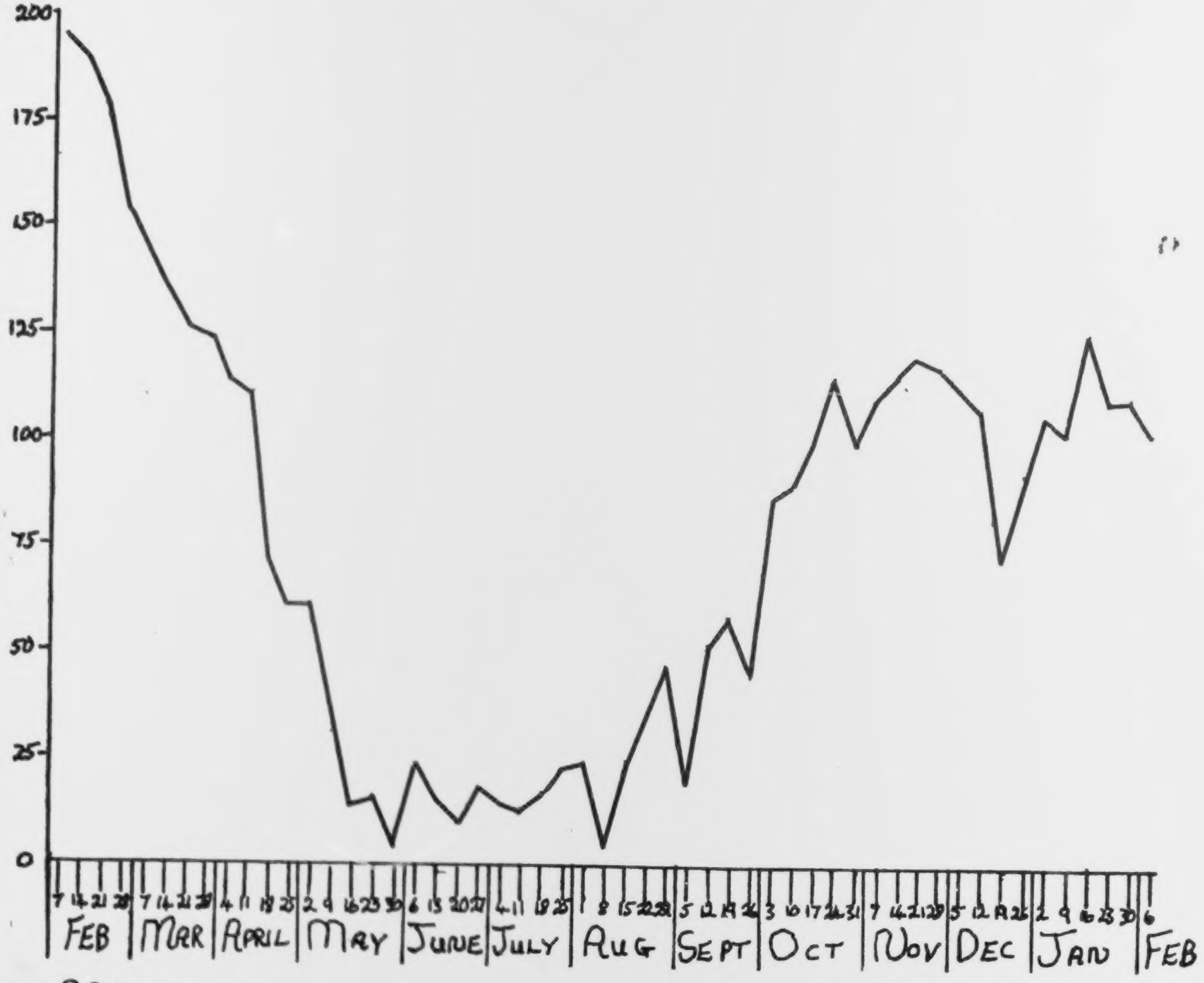
Nearly a third of bookings were simply a matter of walking to the Centre, heavy brown cylinder in hand.

Of course, the number of bookings do not reveal the number of players. And if other "*users*" had a cheap game bowls players certainly did. Each booking almost definitely refers to four players and quite often to six or even eight people.

The Manager put his energy into seeking sponsors for competitions. Local firms and newspapers were approached successfully.

RECREATION CENTRE USAGE
INDOOR BOWLS.

GRAPH 2.



The Manager often had the winning combination as he was organiser, captain of Sutton Centre and a leading player!

All the same the second year's casual bookings fell by 1,000 and summer usage was only equivalent to one full afternoon. The following year the figures were much improved for both summer and winter (see Table 7).

TABLE 7.

	YEAR 1.	YEAR 2.	YEAR 3.
Bowls bookings	4,116	3,115	4,841
Summer Weekly Average	21	21	26
Winter Weekly Average	112	82	131

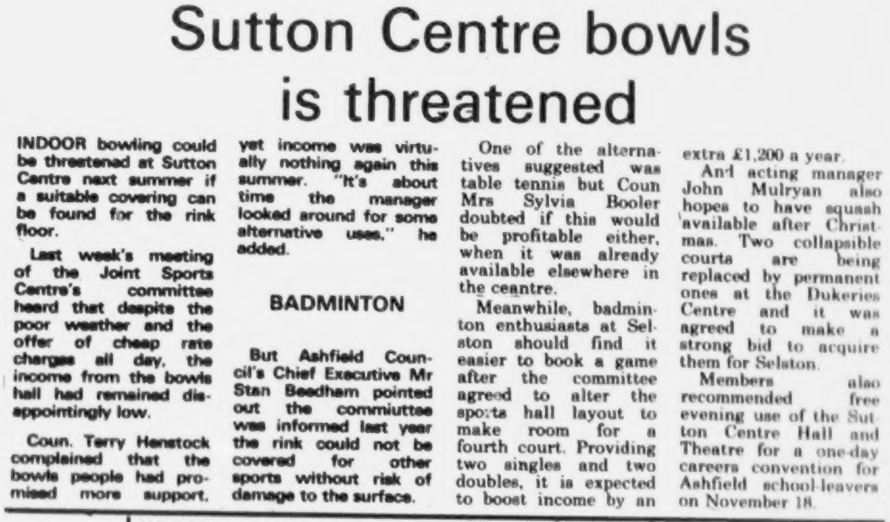
In strict percentages the bowls hall was used for 5% of the available time during the summer and 55% during the longer winter period.[5] In the third winter club and league accounted for over a third of the total and peak bookings. They were truly the backbone of usage as they closely resemble the average bookings over the period.

Total possible bookings per week	455 (Bowls rinks)
Winter club/league bookings per week	140
Total possible peak bookings per peak	272 (Bowls rinks)
Club bookings per peak	112

Put in general terms the management of the rink did reverse a decline and produce a definite improvement. The manager moved beyond the cafeteria model into what might be called the client model. He did not try to alter his clients' habits but to support and strengthen them. There were very few bowls courses because it was assumed that people would be players already or find their way into a team which would coach them. It fell to the Sports Council to kill two birds with one stone, namely Bowls Courses in the summer.

The client model undoubtedly satisfied the clients! They had the attention of an accomplished player who organised cash prizes for their competitions. They had leagues on just the times, days and months which they most wanted. And they had a top class thick felt green on which to play. It was of little concern to them that the bowls hall was hardly used during the summer - providing the green was not used for anything else! The Bowls Manager spoke for his clients when he said "*nobody bothers about outside greens not being used in the winter!*".

Some Councillors did bother about summer usage. When different activities were suggested the headlines ran "*Bowls Threatened*". (That is an average booking of 26 per week)).



Sutton Centre bowls is threatened

INDOOR bowling could be threatened at Sutton Centre next summer if a suitable covering can be found for the rink floor.

Last week's meeting of the Joint Sports Centre's committee heard that despite the poor weather and the offer of cheap rate charges all day, the income from the bowls hall had remained disappointingly low.

Coun. Terry Henstock complained that the bowls people had promised more support, yet income was virtually nothing again this summer. "It's about time the manager looked around for some alternative uses," he added.

BADMINTON

But Ashfield Council's Chief Executive Mr Stan Beedham pointed out the commiuttee was informed last year the rink could not be covered for other sports without risk of damage to the surface.

One of the alternatives suggested was table tennis but Coun Mrs Sylvia Booler doubted if this would be profitable either, when it was already available elsewhere in the ceantre.

Meanwhile, badminton enthusiasts at Selston should find it easier to book a game after the committee agreed to alter the sports hall layout to make room for a fourth court. Providing two singles and two doubles, it is expected to boost income by an extra £1,200 a year.

And acting manager John Mulryan also hopes to have squash available after Christmas. Two collapsible courts are being replaced by permanent ones at the Dukeries Centre and it was agreed to make a strong bid to acquire them for Selston.

Members also recommended free evening use of the Sutton Centre Hall and Theatre for a one-day careers convention for Ashfield school-leavers on November 18.

NOTTS. FREE PRESS - 15.8.80.

The discussion went round in circles. The green had cost a great deal of money and it was unthinkable that it should be damaged. A protective covering would cost a great deal more and there were no suggestions from management as to what might then take place. Management put together lengthy memoranda on why no other use was possible. It all came back to the green, the felt having taken on the character of hallowed turf.

There were occasional chinks of light though. The firm which had supplied the felt had since lost their records in a fire. Nevertheless, the all-purpose floor sports surface they supplied to go over other bowls greens looked remarkably similar to Sutton Centre's green itself. It was possible that an all-purpose felt had been supplied in the first place! This chink was closed because it was "*inconceivable*" that the bowls surface was anything other than a "*prime*" bowls surface. It was also embarassing to consider covering the "*turf*" with virtually identical material "*to protect it*". Even covering it could risk damage.

The clients were well satisfied with the way things were. Keen players kept to the same pace and rhythm summer and winter, outdoors and now indoors. Their interests lay in maximum comfortable playing not in maximizing the usage of the Centre.

In April 1977 the windows between the bowls hall and the ice rink were covered in brown paper as a temporary screen. The paper remained and was later replaced by more paper. The paper blocked the only source of "*borrowed*" natural light and stopped the bowls hall being used as a spectator gallery for the ice rink.

Ice-Rink.

The aims or goals of the Recreation Centre can be listed as follows:-

1. Earn revenue to reduce costs substantially if not cover them.
2. Provide a facility for all Ashfield's ratepayers.
3. Provide a facility for all Ashfield's residents old, not so old and young.
4. Maximize use of the facility.
5. Develop the sporting potential of ratepayers/residents.
6. Introduce and encourage sports as comprehensively as possible.

All these aims were made difficult by the near absolute terms in which they were expressed. Of course they were not strictly incompatible but different measures of the ambiguous slogan "*Sport for All*". The crucial problem, though, lay in the difference between these ends and the means of achieving them. It has been said that the means used resembled a cafeteria model in the Sports Hall and a client model in the Bowls Hall - both of which had an air of let nature take its course. The means developed by the Ice Rink Manager were more complicated as he set out to develop all levels and variants of skill and interest. At any one time, then, he used a "*catch-all*" model which meant that over time he intervened to change the balance of the programme. Whilst neither "*catch-all*" model nor "*intervention*" adequately describe the variety of actions and the alterations they do go some way towards indicating an essentially active approach.

All the raw figures on ice-skating relate to paying individuals rather than bookings. The totals for each year show both the decline from initial casual popularity and the increasing commitment to serious skating that was taking place:-

TABLE 8. ICE-SKATING CASUAL USER TOTALS

PEAK TIME	YEAR 1.	YEAR 2.	YEAR 3.
ADULTS	25,906	19,333	17,850
NON-ADULTS	98,508	91,939	77,152
SKATE HIRERS	111,897	71,208	56,656

From the first year then the number of adults dropped by 25% in the second and 18% in the third and the number of young people by 7% in the second and 16% in the third. The proportion of adults remained roughly the same at about 1/5. Skate hire figures reduced by 36% in the second year and 20% in the third. In the third year there were 95,002 people skating. 10% had bought their own skates in the first year, 36% had done so in the second year and 40% in the third. The public usage during school time was remarkably consistent at 25,000 each year and schools' usage was taken for granted and uncounted. In order to get a sense of the blades on the ice it could be estimated that, on the basis of public skating alone, there would be close to one million skating payments in the space of eight years. All this on a practice rink with precious little spectator space!

With the exception of resurfacing by water and ice planer the rink was in continuous use. Club use and coaching took place between afternoon and evening sessions, that is at the less popular times. The week's programme was changed. The adults-only session was given priority even though the attendance figures were never very high. "Popular Night" described adults and young people with the top twenty hits playing. "Disco Night" had a light-show, record requests and a leisure attendant who became an accomplished D.J.

Skaters came in through their own reception (still uncovered despite long queues and frequent bad weather) and remained in the area all session. The manager opened the serving hatch for hot drinks and snacks and installed a bank of vending machines. The snack bar and machines were well used, not least because skaters were under the impression that they could not go out of the door towards the Sports Hall, just as access was prevented, by notice, from the other side. The rink became a self-contained and virtually separate facility.

The coaching and the club activity produced results. The club won inter-rink competitions and coaches produced the first flock of champions. The ice-skaters claimed their place on the national network just as the Bowlers and gymnasts had done on the regional network. Clubs' successes became a regular feature of the back page of the Notts. Free Press.

Sutton boys are a skating double

●Sutton skaters 13 year old David Bryan (left) and 12 year old Carl Briggs, who finished first and second in the novice boys section at the Bristol Open Skating Championships, pictured with coach Irene Monks.

NOTTS. FREE PRESS - 13.4.79.

The club had its shows too. In February 1978 the Rink Manager reported to the Joint Sports Centre Management Committee on the figures for a three night "Spectacular". 654 people had attended to produce £110 in takings. There had been a £61 profit and £20 per night more income than on comparable nights. The manager asked for half the profits to go towards the Ashfield Ice-Skating Club's party and the Councillors agreed to it.

The point is that whilst the manager was patron of his client club it also had an independent existence and he had many other interests to serve. Reversing the skate hire figures, for example, suggested that the great majority of skaters (60%) were still casual attenders along for fun. His approach touched upon the problem for keen sportsmen faced with a bunch of determined leisure seekers. The club encouraged teenagers to competition standard. The successes of Robin Cousins and the Nottingham couple, Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean, not so far away helped to give families the heights to aim for. Yet so many people on the ice were content to sail around steadily. Many were still taking to the ice and falling over or careering into the barriers. The Rink Manager often said that giggles, laughs and legs akimbo should have the same attentive support as the budding stars. Sport to him meant people competing with themselves. The *'catch all'* model develops different contracts with different types of users.

The philosophy produced its practical results. Excluding profits on refreshments, takings in the third year were over £50,000 which must have been close to all the labour costs before the County Council's substantial contribution had been made. The endless attention to a spectrum of interests had produced a programme which attracted casual users all year round, established a club, provided for two professional coaches, and caused the sales of dozens of pairs of skates. Sometimes the rink had a family/homely atmosphere but often it buzzed with the elaborate rituals of courtship display. The catch-all model worked in isolation. The question is surely whether the catch all model would have worked just as successfully throughout the Centre as a whole? It is tempting to argue that each model was appropriate to its kinds of sporting activity. It is more likely though, that differing degrees of imagination and levels of interest are involved. If the latter is true then during the first three years the Ice-Rink Manager did virtually all and everything he could. Even so, he saw a 20% drop in the ice-rink's attendances.

Leisure in a Sports Centre.

At this point the account moves to "*use*" of a different kind and the areas which were additional to pitches and rinks. Here there would have to be developmental work of the "*catch all*" kind for there to be any public participation. Out in the town there were networks of interests as well as residential neighbourhoods. A promoter might seek to stage an event to benefit from an interest, a voluntary group could stage a performance or hold a dance. How would these tentative possibilities be drawn in and dealt with?

The question casts a different light on the building itself. Spaces become the theatrical stages of imaginary productions. Looking from the balcony at three games of badminton in progress prompted the question, to what other purposes could such a vast hall be put? To think this way introduced more criteria alongside those already listed - criteria which together lead to making of an atmosphere in the place:

What functions could be put on in the Sports Hall?
What were the seated spectators in the theatre to look at?
What of the hotel side of the business: the bars and the catering?

In sum, there would be the statistics of speculation - with the proviso that this side of the *'business'* was starting from scratch too, and could well be secondary and muted at first.

There were ten functions in the sports hall during the first three years of which three were dances during the closing months. In the first year there was a Boxing Gala and County Tumbling Championships but neither were repeated. In the second year there was a Table-Tennis Tournament, a Bier Keller (organised by the Bar Manager) and Wrestling. The Bier Keller - to promote German beers to an oompah band's music - and the wrestling were flops in that attendances were critically low. The wrestling promoter said,

> *"Many things are to blame for the lack of support but the main reason is venue. There was no place like Sutton Baths".*

The 'sensational opening programme' was also to be the last.

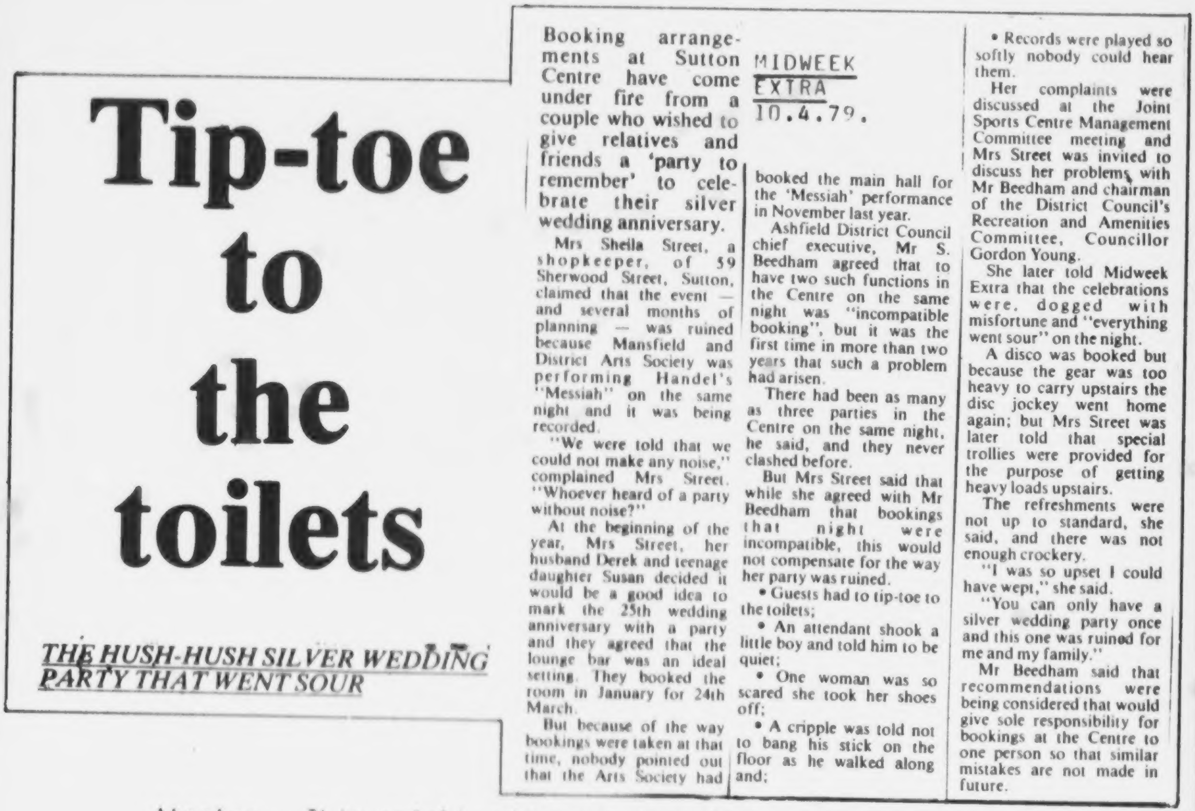
One problem to emerge was that promoters had to arrange their own ticket sales - and in the case of wrestling this took club members to two Outram Street shops or the promoter's own home. The Feasibility Study had suggested a *'box office'* at Reception.

In the third year a pattern similar to the wrestling experience was repeated. There was cheerful and optimistic press coverage beforehand. This was to be the first time that the hall acoustic panels had reverberated to massed choirs singing the Messiah. However, sports bookings had been taken as usual and an anniversary celebration scheduled for the same time in the dining hall. The respective noises were simply incompatible. The choirs were offended and did not come again. The late evening squash players turned up and were offered a refund and the Silver Wedding anniversary was '*ruined*'. The press had a field day with headlines like "*Tiptoe to the Toilets*". Quite simply bookings had been taken as if activities occupied accoustic compartments. The Messiah function was actually the first function full of people - the first to approach the scale of the Centre itself.

The Messiah was followed by the District's Flower Show. All reports agreed that it blossomed to a huge success: horticultural exhibits grew to occupy all the exhibition space available. But close to the surface there were key organisational problems. The displays needed tables but only the hall had been booked. There was nothing to hand beyond floor, four walls, heat and light. The organiser contacted the headmaster personally and most of the school's tables were rapidly moved. Secondly, many of the spectators were senior citizens visiting for the first time and they had some trouble with access. The route for the infirm was up a floor in the lift; round through the barrier; along the corridor and down again in another lift. But most laboured up and down the stairs and the organiser was most upset that they should have to.

Such set backs showed how custom-built functions are and how far removed are off-the peg basics by comparison. The '*Jazz*' Festival, held at the suggestion of the Chief Executive one previous January weekend, had also shown that juvenile functions do not bring such a string of stumbling blocks. For them the setting was ideal; running up and down stairs; juvenile jazz bands marching the length and breadth of the hall; being able to watch from two levels above - an indoor function in the middle of winter when the thin summer clothing could be worn in all its bespangled splendour. But the Jazz Bands did not come back either.

The opportunity to go elsewhere did not really exist for Sutton's two Amateur Dramatic Groups. They had stores behind the stage, a flytower for rapid scenery changes and a town centre location. In fact they thrived and became completely identified with the



Tip-toe to the toilets

THE HUSH-HUSH SILVER WEDDING PARTY THAT WENT SOUR

MIDWEEK EXTRA
10.4.79.

Booking arrangements at Sutton Centre have come under fire from a couple who wished to give relatives and friends a 'party to remember' to celebrate their silver wedding anniversary.

Mrs Sheila Street, a shopkeeper, of 59 Sherwood Street, Sutton, claimed that the event — and several months of planning — was ruined because Mansfield and District Arts Society was performing Handel's "Messiah" on the same night and it was being recorded.

"We were told that we could not make any noise," complained Mrs Street. "Whoever heard of a party without noise?"

At the beginning of the year, Mrs Street, her husband Derek and teenage daughter Susan decided it would be a good idea to mark the 25th wedding anniversary with a party and they agreed that the lounge bar was an ideal setting. They booked the room in January for 24th March.

But because of the way bookings were taken at that time, nobody pointed out that the Arts Society had booked the main hall for the 'Messiah' performance in November last year.

Ashfield District Council chief executive, Mr S. Beedham agreed that to have two such functions in the Centre on the same night was "incompatible booking", but it was the first time in more than two years that such a problem had arisen.

There had been as many as three parties in the Centre on the same night, he said, and they never clashed before.

But Mrs Street said that while she agreed with Mr Beedham that bookings that night were incompatible, this would not compensate for the way her party was ruined.

- Guests had to tip-toe to the toilets;
- An attendant shook a little boy and told him to be quiet;
- One woman was so scared she took her shoes off;
- A cripple was told not to bang his stick on the floor as he walked along and;
- Records were played so softly nobody could hear them.

Her complaints were discussed at the Joint Sports Centre Management Committee meeting and Mrs Street was invited to discuss her problems with Mr Beedham and chairman of the District Council's Recreation and Amenities Committee, Councillor Gordon Young.

She later told Midweek Extra that the celebrations were dogged with misfortune and "everything went sour" on the night.

A disco was booked but because the gear was too heavy to carry upstairs the disc jockey went home again; but Mrs Street was later told that special trollies were provided for the purpose of getting heavy loads upstairs.

The refreshments were not up to standard, she said, and there was not enough crockery.

"I was so upset I could have wept," she said.

"You can only have a silver wedding party once and this one was ruined for me and my family."

Mr Beedham said that recommendations were being considered that would give sole responsibility for bookings at the Centre to one person so that similar mistakes are not made in future.

theatre. This relationship was important as only school-based productions and the drama groups set out to develop theatre in Sutton and put the Centre Theatre into working order. From the first to third year the theatre was in use less than 1/5 of the available time - and this despite the thrill all performers felt looking from the stage up the rows of seats.

First, no touring groups could cope with the lack of support; the absence of a ticket sales network and booking office; the need to design and place all publicity, collect tickets on the night and provide refreshments for sale (neither the servery nor the theatre bar would be open). Secondly, the theatre was not on the list of those available to Arts in the East Midlands. Thirdly, the charges were such that amateur groups could only afford to hire the theatre for a dress rehearsal and actual performance, plus a minimum amount of time for preparation of the set. (The two drama groups hired the less expensive crêche or met in the Teachers' Centre for regular rehearsals). Fourthly, the Theatre Advisory Group was not effective at development.[6] Fifthly, it was rare for non-drama occasions to be more than a once-a-year affair.

To take the last point first there were anti-smoking group therapy sessions, slimming club seminars and dancing school reviews which showed the diversity possible. Indeed, such events produced the incidental publicity which could have attracted yet more.

The Sutton and District Organ Society occasionally promoted performances too. All the same the town's two drama groups were the backbone of theatre usage as their productions became more elaborate and played to packed houses for more evenings. The reviewers' enthusiasms were recorded with headlines like "*Players put on thriller at Centre*" and "*A perfect Comedy Team*".

The high spot of all this activity was five nights of "*Midsummer Night's Dream*" by the Huthwaite Players. From the beginning this was described in the press as "*an effort to bring a touch of Shakespearian culture to the area*". The project was a far cry from hardy perennials like "*When We Are Married*". The Players set the action in the twentieth century with the dream sequence costumes as organic as William Morris' wallpaper. The head-line of the Review read "*A 'Dream' of Joy at Huthwaite*". The producer, Patricia Forbes, wrote in Centre Outlook:

> "During Midsummer week, appropriately, Huthwaite Players performed Shakespeare's "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*".
>
> This was the first amateur Shakespearian production in Sutton-in-Ashfield; the first time Chris Meux's specially written music had been heard; the first time the Orchestra Pit had been used; the first collaboration with the Sutton Centre School orchestra and the first modern dress production of the play in the area.
>
> Public response and reaction in the press was highly favourable and the week was a great success."

The Recreation Manager's response was rather more specific and again underlines the difficulty of encouraging enthusiasm while balancing the books. He wrote to the Players' secretary over the £12.85 estimated labour cost for removing paint from the auditorium carpet. The scale of charges meant that the Players could only afford the Theatre immediately before their performance. The set was different from anything previously attempted and called for the use of special iridescent paints which could only be applied insitu. Also, due to the size of various set pieces, these could only be assembled in the auditorium, the workshop being too small and full of equipment. Indeed there was paint on the auditorium carpet but it was one defect, one detracting detail, in an immense human achievement. Thousands of hours had been devoted voluntarily whose traces would take an estimated seven hours to remove. Nearly one and a half thousand people had been enthralled by Shakespeare - until then looked upon as the Sutton equivalent of defying gravity.

Five nights of performance had cost the group £212 in hire charges (even at the reduced rates for local groups). The production had pulled all the stops out and shown the potential.

The other regular Theatre users were the Ashfield Film Society who had removed from the Library. For the first four weeks of opening they held a children's show on Saturday mornings. But the attendances did not cover the combined cost of film hire, theatre hire and independent publicity and the shows were stopped.

The Society was always struggling to survive but just managing somehow. The 1978/79 programme had thirteen full-length films which members could see for 27 pence each if they watched them all. The final film of the season was shown free to attract members to the Annual General Meeting. The significance of the struggle that year was that as Sutton's one remaining Cinema was to become a Supermarket the Film Society was the only provider of cinema and the Theatre the only well equipped venue. With membership rallies and financial assistance from East Midlands Arts, films were still shown in Sutton the following year.

As a rule of thumb, then, the Theatre being used as a Theatre depended upon strong, free-standing capabilities of client groups who would organise all aspects of events for themselves. This is almost a prescription for having someone *'on the inside'* and the proscription of *'outsiders'*. Insiders could pull the facility together and make the event a whole. The Drama teacher who produced the Day Centre pantomimes with such gusto had keys and contacts at her finger-tips. Receptionists would let a secretary know if someone came for tickets for her group's performances. For client groups, then, the Theatre was workable because they knew they were to provide fresh coffee in the dining hall themselves and have town centre shops as their box offices.

The reference to the client model is neither inaccurate nor accidental for the Bowls Hall Manager was also the Theatre Manager. Clearly, though, the Theatre needed direct interest in drama as well as a catch-all approach. By 1979 Ratepayer Councillors were openly identifying Theatre usage - or largely non-usage - as an issue. Such an issue hung on the point that, even for the practiced local drama groups, hiring just the basic facilities was only a beginning; just one foot forward on the path of fulfilling frustrations which lead to staging a pleasurable and cost-covering event.

To provide a full scale 250 seat theatre in a small town complete with flytower and orchestra pit was an act of faith which cannot be justified by these findings. Far less specific provision might well have catered for the theatre groups and provided a more useful space for other activities. Alternatively theatre promotion demanded a much higher priority.

The dining hall and crèche nearby were just bare facilities and had comparatively little need to be developed further. Despite adverse publicity from the Messiah incident the dining hall was regularly hired for wedding receptions at weekends. Open discos (in the dining hall) did not prove as successful for management or clientele. One participant at the "Race Against Time" Disco in May 1979 recalled:-

> *"The band was great, U.F.O. and Heavy Metal and all that. They had men standing about telling you what to do all the time. You couldn't drink in the dining hall and had to stay in the bar. It was just like being back at school only they let you go to the pub now and then".*

Fonteyns of youth!

TWO budding Margot Fonteyns stealing the show at the Sutton Centre School Theatre, High Pavement.

They are six-year-olds Joanne Mason, left, and Maria Booth, from Kirkby-in-Ashfield.

Both are members of the Christine March School of Dancing.

They were appearing in the school's Winter Dance Revue '80.

NOTTINGHAM
EVENING POST
13.3.80.

And there were no more open discos. The young people's gatherings gave way to adult celebrations.

By 1979 every winter weekend saw two anniversary parties or wedding receptions. Some positive steps were made by management. A boiler was lit in advance if requested and the Centre Disco was wheeled into place. People appreciated the low cost of basic hire (£3.92 per hour including VAT), got stuck into self-catering and prepared to finish earlier than they might as security services after 11.30p.m. cost £6.00 per hour. During the weekdays the dining hall (or the smaller dining hall) were booked for meetings too; council meetings and annual general meetings particularly. Indeed, activity fairly buzzed on the top floor around - but not in - the Theatre with its too specific design.

Two floors beneath the crèche was popular for children's birthday parties. But here, again, there were snags. At first the Receation Manager considered partitioning the crèche into *'education'* and *'recreation'*. When this idea received no support it became necessary to clear the crèche's toys and equipment which was no mean effort and required more storage space. In effect, a conflict of interests between crèche and children's parties was structured. If it had been forseen some of the conflict could have been avoided by extra storage. The playgroup organiser was less inconvenienced if there were no parties. There were nine parties, for example, between October and December 1980 but she was required to clear away every weekend.

The acceleration of the *'birthday business'* ran counter to all other trends and can only be because newspaper advertisements began to appear from February 1979 onwards. By now it could be wholly unclear what was happening over catering and bars. For example, the theatre bar has been said to be closed when the theatre had a performance but open for a disco. A little more detail should make it clear why this was so.

The bar licence was granted on 17th June 1977 (the Licensed Victuallers Association having opposed it). The two bars, bowls hall and theatre quickly settled into quite different *'images'*. The bowls bar was never crowded, sold as much fresh fruit juice as alcohol and had a mix of people in shorts, redfaced from squash, on a table next to pensioners nursing half a bitter. No-one seemed to go out for a night to the bowls bar but there were usually eight or ten people there.

The Theatre bar was used by people who had come to the Centre specifically to drink there. The clientele was largely Sutton's more bizarre older men and youths who were *'approximately'* 18; after 10p.m. were added Service Operatives waiting to go off duty.

The solution was obvious and right in line with the client model. The Theatre bar was closed to the public and only to be opened for private hire. In effect, the Theatre bar joined in the birthday business of the adjacent dining hall. This change of use cut across expectations though. A group of teachers thought to further community spirit by forming a darts team and playing the local pubs. They knew no other pub made a spectator charge and so clubbed together to pay the 11p. spectator charge for each opposition member. The response to their request to install a dart board was that it would be a health and safety hazard. The request came just when the Theatre bar ceased to be either for the public in general or for theatre-goers. Whenever it was open it was also effectively shut by a notice which read "Private Party". The bar could even be hired without the bar itself being open - as it was for a fist-aid course. There were 21 such functions between September and December 1980.

There were two further trends in keeping with the decline from the first year's level of activity. They were the scale of the Annual Festival and the number of days for which the Recreation Area was closed to the public. The Annual Festival shrank from a large scale voluntary group event to a small commercial venture[7]. (see Table 9.)

TABLE 9.

Festival Items	Year I	Year II	Year III
Voluntary Organisers	23	16	3
Commercial Organisers	2	1	5

There was no Festival in 1981.

In the first year the Sports Centre was closed on Christmas Day and Boxing Day. In the second and third year ten summer days were added. In 1981 the summer days when closed increased to twelve.

The trend of decline in overall figures has to be seen in the light of a hardening loyalty from a broad band of users. A home had been established for many client clubs and groups. There was no doubt of the benefit of this. The doubt lay in the matter of continuously stimulating new and casual activity.

The Recreation Centre had the potential for being a prime feeder for specialist clubs who could often be based elsewhere. It was attractive enough to encourage novices. The area was well cared for. It was kept, for the most part, in its original condition.

All the same this is not the point at which hasty conclusions can be drawn albeit that the client-model seems to be the most pervasive. Three reasons why a conclusion cannot be firmly reached at this point are that research on developments ceased to collect exact details after February 1980, the direct relationship between usage and the personality of the individual manager, and that there were strong undercurrents during the first three years which would create a surface tow sooner or later. The undercurrents have to do with the problems of political and administrative purchase on the Recreation Centre as a whole. The Recreation Manager was accountable to the Joint Sports Centres Management Committee but this in itself was a mini-council drawn from two authorities. Ashfield District Council began with no Leisure Administration as such nor did it have much experience to go on. But learning was taking place, Mansfield's Leisure Centre and their own Kirkby Festival Hall were offering points of direct comparison which had not been previously available. The structure at Sutton had been lightened by two Supervisors leaving for Kirkby Festival Hall and not being replaced. Dismissal proceedings against the second Sports Hall Manager were completed. For the time-being the Recreation Manager would still be relating to the District's Chief Executive but once the Engineer and Surveyor retired his department would be reorganised.

A process of getting to grips with the slack, the unused potential was therefore underway which could take a decade to consolidate. The first moves in this process, from 1980 to 1982 will be touched upon in Chapter 19 when the story is brought as far forward as time itself allows. The relevance of this chapter and for those chapters between, comes in the comments made to the Press by Sports Minister, Mr. Hector Monroe, when he visited the Centre and then addressed the annual meeting of the Regional Council for Sport and Recreation in the Theatre:-

"Sutton Centre fills me with optimism and confidence. In some parts of the country there is no doubt that we have underuse of excellent school facilities and the schools are not designed for public use. But here we have the reverse. The situation here is that we have superb community facilities used by the school. I think it is a model which may well be copied by other areas in the country. It does seem to me that this solution of community use does get the greatest reaction from the public."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: THE MINOR PARTS 1977/80.

A census form was sent to parts of the Centre on the first of May 1977. The simple count of employees and volunteers was repeated each year until 1981. The picture which emerged was clear and remarkably consistent. 1977 was a turning point. Until then staffing had been on the increase. After 1977 there was either no increase or dramatic decline (see Appendix 28). There were four years of "*cuts*". And so another question was raised about the small and vulnerable services built into Sutton Centre. No longer were the issues, could they perform their traditional tasks properly or would they come off badly in space-sharing agreements with the school? From 1977 onwards there was the struggle to survive. Quite literally, then, could Sutton Centre prove to be a fortress for the present as well as a blue-print for the future?

Probation and Social Services.

Probation proved to be a cut above other services in a number of respects. It was the least affected as its budget was part of "*law and order*". Probation staff had the most extensive training, the best pay and conditions and the most autonomy over project funds. Probation Officers' liberal views surprised other staff. More surprising yet, was their preparedness to intervene on behalf of actual or potential clients. With discrete determination Probation Officers could support summer holiday and "*out reach*" programmes providing they were not responsible for the day-to-day operations. The school and youth service had an ally if they would only ask. Participants kept quiet about the arrangements just in case; the welfare of joint initiatives was more important than the double-edged risks of declaring them. So one minor part, battleweary at times over the near hopeless conditions of so many clients, had more inner and extended strength than any other section.

Social Services could also support initiatives - particularly through its "*intermediate treatment*" funds. Young teenagers in high risk neighbourhoods had experiences organised for them - often by Sutton Centre's sixth formers acting as group leaders.

The Principal Social Worker, the ex-Probation Officer who had focussed attention on juvenile delinquency in 1976, pitched himself into forming the Ashfield Council for Voluntary Service and two clubs on older council house estates. A.C.V.S. moved into the old Police Station which Social Services had so recently left. Indeed, Social Services was almost symbolised by the fleet of *six"meals on wheels"vans* which parked for just an hour each day. The work was "*out there*", all over the town in fact.

Social Services was like Probation in that it did not want any school space but did want a positive attitude to its clients, their relatives and children. Both, too, found the tutor group principle compatible with their "*case load*" approach and appreciated the convenience of tutors being so close. There were many ad-hoc case conferences through chance meetings and "*popping into*" teaching areas. All benefits of this nature were particularly appreciated as the scale of problems and the strain of coping were growing at an alarming rate.

The Registrar and Careers Office.

While the Probation and Social Services were steadily adjusting to modern offices and the novelty of reception areas, the Registrar had criticisms of the centralization of services to contend with. There was strong opposition to closing the offices at King's Mill Hospital and Kirkby. Indeed, the opposition was sufficiently strong for a limited service to be reopened. The logic of being registered at Sutton Centre, then educated and recreated until a death certificate was issued, held little appeal to the Registrar.
The function is a confidential statistical service with direct responsibility to Somerset House. All suggestions of circulating gross figures were steadfastly resisted. The Registrar's area became like a cave - with one entrance, exit and a procedure for circulating. Indeed, the Registrar was most concerned lest the happy atmosphere elsewhere spill into the area and disturb the bereaved. Just once, when a typical week's activities were chronicled throughout the Centre to give a cross-section of everything that was happening it was learned that there had been 64 births, 15 deaths and an average of 33.2 visitors per hour.

←Registrar
←Social Services
Mansfield Registration District
Sutton-in-Ashfield Sub-District
Office of the Registrar of
Births and Deaths
The Registrar also attends at the
Careers Office, Pond Street,
Kirkby-in-Ashfield on
Tuesday and Thursday 2·00-4·00

The Registrar was one legal data collecting point in Sutton Centre and the Careers Office was becoming the other. The latter did not alter by choice but by circumstances. After 1978 school leavers were no longer required to collect their National Insurance Cards from the office. The reduction in first opportunities, particularly the number of apprenticeships, meant fewer openings on the books. Careers teachers who arranged work experience weeks for fifth formers were jumping the gun by "*loaning*" a likely candidate for a job which would not then be notified to the office at all. The result was dwindling figures for openings in the weekly returns to County Hall.

The Careers Office had two other listening tasks away from the Centre in the form of industrial and school visits. Being the Ashfield area office meant travelling considerable distances.

This was,in a sense,why extra effort was needed because of mounting difficulties and because of "*frozen posts*". Probation, Social Services and Careers were not "*cut*", they were put on ice. The general rule was no new posts, all posts vacated left unfilled unless strategic need could be proved. County Hall had a Manpower Committee whose approach made requesting a replacement like volunteering to go over Niagara Falls in a barrel. There was nothing less than a limpet-like tenacity to getting the overheads down.

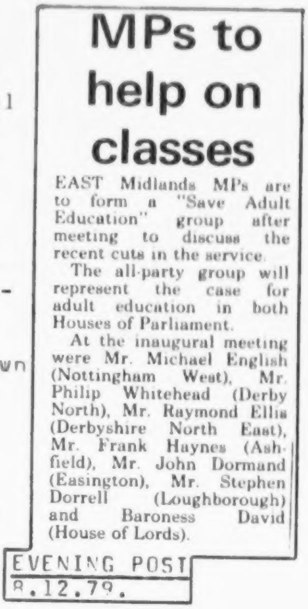
Local Adult Education.

Adult Education became a prime target for the new economies. So significant were the changes, and the part played by being in Sutton Centre, that the 1976 position will be briefly reviewed before the drama of 1977-80 is described.

In 1976, Local Authority Adult Education took the shape of a full-time Principal, three evening Deputy Principals, a part-time secretary and twenty part-time tutors. Many of these tutors had accumulated fifteen to eighteen hours of coursework. Courses were provided at twenty-eight points throughout the town. A high proportion of those in receipt were elderly and paid no fees. Adult Education had been introduced into every old person's home in the town. By and large the vocational courses, especially those needing equipment, took place within the Centre itself.

During the next three years the charge per two-hour course increased from thirty-three pence to sixty pence to one pound. The requirement for a minimum enrolment was increased from twelve to fifteen persons. The fee of one pound was required for all courses with the exception of those which were vocational and to be charged half-rate.[1] The position of the Principal was first put as a one-year contract and then re-organised into being a lectureship at a Further Education College some eight miles away. For a year the part-time secretary still resident at the Centre acted as Principal whilst the displaced Principal became a clerk in a distant college. During the following year the Principal was given a fifty per-cent teaching load at another Further Education College and quite soon afterwards took a full-time lectureship there. Not long after the part-time secretary was given notice to retire.

Between 1976 and 1981 course enrolments reduced by 92% with only the most popular of recreational activities, such as car maintenance and yoga, remaining as a small proportion alongside those vocational course of Typewriting and 'O' level study. The great strength of a service as social service to senior citizens had been transformed into its greatest weakness. To repeat an example, elderly men and women living on their own had enjoyed Luncheon Club to which they brought their own food and which they cooked and ate together. They were in no position to pay a pound for each such period. In March 1980 there were but thirteen courses surviving in Sutton-in-Ashfield.



MPs to help on classes

EAST Midlands MPs are to form a "Save Adult Education" group after meeting to discuss the recent cuts in the service.

The all-party group will represent the case for adult education in both Houses of Parliament.

At the inaugural meeting were Mr. Michael English (Nottingham West), Mr. Philip Whitehead (Derby North), Mr. Raymond Ellis (Derbyshire North East), Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield), Mr. John Dormand (Easington), Mr. Stephen Dorrell (Loughborough) and Baroness David (House of Lords).

EVENING POST
8.12.79.

The reorganisation which ultimately displaced the Adult Education Principal was a county-wide policy. This was the reorganisation which began in December 1976 when responsibility for Adult Education was moved into Further Education Colleges. The County Treasurer's comments then were:

> *"The proposed reorganisation results in a reduction of four posts and a saving, at a maximum, of £22,000".*

Sutton Centre was the only non Further Education Institution where the position of Principal survived at all, even if only for a brief while. For a year Sutton Centre was also the only non Further Education Institution in the County at which there was any adult education whatsoever. Then school money was spent modifying spaces on the adult education floor from being open plan areas in order to make four seminar rooms. This expenditure of a little over three thousand pounds increased the number of groups which could occupy the floor at the same time. Sixth form teaching had been planned as one of the uses of the floor, nine such sessions were held in 1979-80.

By virtue of being part of Sutton Centre, Local Education Authority Adult Education was at first spared and then put into cold storage where it lay largely dormant until a change of political will could re-introduce the service. The office, the designated teaching areas (shared with the sixth form) and ten per-cent of overall space remained. On March 10th 1980 the Chairman of the Education Committee, Coun. Mrs. Caroline Minkley said,

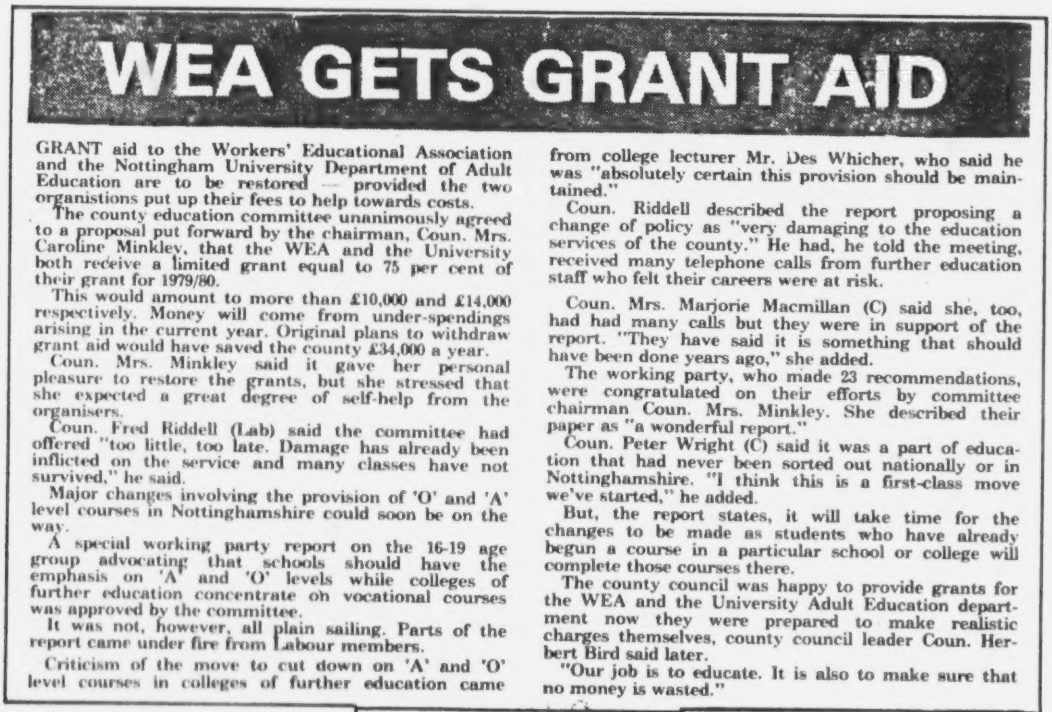
> *"The cuts imposed last year did not allow time to give full consideration to all the implications".*

Overall 36,000 students had been reduced to 6,000. There had been an affliction upon small centres, social provision and small classes (see Appendix 29.).

In 1976 there were two W.E.A. Organisers; a Resident Tutor for the area and a Tutor specifically for the Mining Industry. The Resident Tutor organised for Sutton and seven other centres in North Notts. The Mining Industry Tutor organised a day-long two year course for Union Officials and Pit Deputies. The Resident Tutor's activities took two main directions, short-term liberal adult education in matters such as Geology, Local History or Musical Appreciation where he was guided by branches of the Association, and Trade Union Studies which responded to the provision of the Health and Safety Act. The day-time work of the W.E.A. was largely with, and for, trades unionists, whilst the evening activities were more related to adults as alert citizens.

In 1977 the Tutor for the mining industry retired and he was replaced by the then Resident Tutor for Sutton Centre. In effect, the latter post disappeared. As it happened, the person appointed spanned both roles and continued with a modest expansion. He left two years later with the Resident Tutor's post still frozen. His replacement was another locally born ex-miner who was also prepared to continue being responsible for the liberal adult education and Trade Union Study Courses at the Centre. A year later, when one of his part-time tutors suggested a women's group, he agreed to a ten-week experimental period. A créche was organised on the adult education floor in the teaching area next to where the group met, and the group itself proved more than capable of self-management.

Even though, then, there was no Resident Tutor at Sutton Centre from 1978 successive tutors for the Mining Industry compensated for this by accepting additional responsibility. The Local Authority did not take advantage by demanding the return of office space. The Tutor to the Mining Industry turned his attention to providing a day-time course in the next County. His prime task actually expanded.



WEA GETS GRANT AID

GRANT aid to the Workers' Educational Association and the Nottingham University Department of Adult Education are to be restored — provided the two organistions put up their fees to help towards costs.

The county education committee unanimously agreed to a proposal put forward by the chairman, Coun. Mrs. Caroline Minkley, that the WEA and the University both receive a limited grant equal to 75 per cent of their grant for 1979/80.

This would amount to more than £10,000 and £14,000 respectively. Money will come from under-spendings arising in the current year. Original plans to withdraw grant aid would have saved the county £34,000 a year.

Coun. Mrs. Minkley said it gave her personal pleasure to restore the grants, but she stressed that she expected a great degree of self-help from the organisers.

Coun. Fred Riddell (Lab) said the committee had offered "too little, too late. Damage has already been inflicted on the service and many classes have not survived," he said.

Major changes involving the provision of 'O' and 'A' level courses in Nottinghamshire could soon be on the way.

A special working party report on the 16-19 age group advocating that schools should have the emphasis on 'A' and 'O' levels while colleges of further education concentrate on vocational courses was approved by the committee.

It was not, however, all plain sailing. Parts of the report came under fire from Labour members.

Criticism of the move to cut down on 'A' and 'O' level courses in colleges of further education came from college lecturer Mr. Des Whicher, who said he was "absolutely certain this provision should be maintained."

Coun. Riddell described the report proposing a change of policy as "very damaging to the education services of the county." He had, he told the meeting, received many telephone calls from further education staff who felt their careers were at risk.

Coun. Mrs. Marjorie Macmillan (C) said she, too, had had many calls but they were in support of the report. "They have said it is something that should have been done years ago," she added.

The working party, who made 23 recommendations, were congratulated on their efforts by committee chairman Coun. Mrs. Minkley. She described their paper as "a wonderful report."

Coun. Peter Wright (C) said it was a part of education that had never been sorted out nationally or in Nottinghamshire. "I think this is a first-class move we've started," he added.

But, the report states, it will take time for the changes to be made as students who have already begun a course in a particular school or college will complete those courses there.

The county council was happy to provide grants for the WEA and the University Adult Education department now they were prepared to make realistic charges themselves, county council leader Coun. Herbert Bird said later.

"Our job is to educate. It is also to make sure that no money is wasted."

EVENING POST 15.2.80.

Meanwhile, at Sutton Centre, a womens' studies group with créche had been established through the efforts of the part-time tutor and the group itself. No-one thought to question an ad-hoc créche as such; temporary supports for learners are consistent with being in a Community Education Centre.

University Extra-Mural.

University Extra-Mural provision had shared the courses for the mining industry with the W.E.A. and followed these up with a two-year Saturday morning course on "Political Economy" and a string of one-day conferences on the theme: "Local Industries and their Problems". University Extra-Mural effort also supported the Centre by piloting three experimental courses. The viability of the courses having been demonstrated, the L.E.A. Principal assumed responsibility for them.

Some members of the Sociology class wished to continue meeting as a local study group. Although their numbers were small the University Extra-Mural Tutor supported this group for the first year. The group then became independent and met for a further two years until its work was done.[2] An oral history group was also sponsored for a year and it, too, continued until an account of the "Depression" had been produced. Innovations continued.

In 1980, the University Extra-Mural resident tutors in and around Nottingham reorganised themselves voluntarily. Rather than there being separate resident tutors for five centres a core group was formed. As with the L.E.A. and the W.E.A. a full-time Organiser was withdrawn. Even so, the office space and teaching space were not taken over by other parts of the Centre (although this would have been unlikely as the part-time secretary and miners' library remained).

Re-organisation, as with the L.E.A. and W.E.A. had resulted in the virtual removal of a resident person responsible for the functioning and development of the service. In each case there was to be a reduced presence - reduced to a terminal manned by part-time secretaries. And, in each case, the Communtity Education Centre actually helped to keep the terminal operational; just by being diverse and standing for something.

Adult Literacy.

There was never a period of certainty as far as Adult Literacy is concerned. First there was neither pay nor teaching materials. Then there was absorption into the Local Education Authority and a nominal pay as if the organiser was just another part-time Adult Education tutor. Then there were the vagaries of Local Education Authority re-organisation to be withstood. Nevertheless, by the 1st of May 1979 there were twenty voluntary helpers and six part-time staff. The adult education teaching room into which Adult Literacy had spread had become a grotto of books, charts and all manner of colourful materials.

Three-fifths of Adult Literacy "meetings" were out of the Centre and in the homes of either the tutor or tutees. Those which took place in the Centre spread along the Adult Education Floor. Signs marked the Service's priority claim, jostling with the school for the vacated Adult Education rooms.

Between 1975 and 1977 the Adult Literacy staff had developed a Mode III C.S.E. During the next year they added numeracy to literacy and devised a Mode III C.S.E. in Basic Skills for Adults. The following year the organiser formed a Stroke-Club and made use of the Day Centre ambulances and a free evening there to offer two sessions to those suffering from strokes; one in movement and the other in speech.

The number of adults actively engaged in adult literacy never dropped below two hundred even though people came and went at their own free-will more or less continuously. As new"problem adults" were discovered, whether they were Arab doctors at the local hospital or Vietnamese refugees in Mansfield, they were referred to Adult Literacy at Sutton Centre. In terms of the numbers of people involved Adult Literacy grew to be the fourth biggest part of Sutton Centre by 1981.

Sutton Centre gave Adult Literacy a warm secure room, teaching spaces into which it could spread and a reception service for when organisers were not present. Adult Literacy students became just yet more adults finding their way to a class. Direct costs could not have been cut beyond stopping the organisers part-time fee. Indirect costs were often met by Sutton Centre.

Teachers' Centres were also the subject of *"cuts"* The number of centres was reduced from six to two; those remaining were Nottingham and Sutton Centre. The responsibility of Sutton Centre's Warden became the Northern half of the County. Whereas the Warden had been trying to support the Southern part of Ashfield by establishing a sub-centre at Hucknall, the equipment and part-time staff from the centres to be closed now flowed into Sutton Centre. Working Parties in interests like Primary Maths. and Higher Order Reading Skills had already arisen from earlier courses. These Working Parties now had the task of extending their membership to the County's borders. The duplicator rattled out reams of posters to tell teachers in schools what resources they could draw upon ("The Staff Room copy of 'What-We-Got'") and invite them to the useful open night on Wednesday evenings. The result, though, was many more short courses at Sutton Centre! In addition to an A.G.M. the March week in 1980 included five meetings on topics ranging from guitar playing to teaching poor readers. Far from struggling with reduced funds the Teachers' Centre struggled with a huge increase in needs and demands. Once again an outpost at Sutton Centre had escaped the death blows being landed elsewhere.

All in all the Adult Education Floor was still a fairly busy place. The holding operation of W.E.A. and University Extra Mural combined with the expanding sixth form, Adult Literacy and Teachers' Centre to take the place of the decimated Local Authority Adult Education. (see Table 10 over)

TEACHERS CENTRE

Partitions on the Adult Education Floor

The "cuts", though meant more than a reduction of real, financial support. There was also a change of climate as if a swing from sunny to stormy. All parts experienced a pressure upon their style to become "self-financing"; to become "cost-effective", to maximize the value for money. And whereas Adult Education was given no chance to move in the desired direction, the Day Centre was given hints. Vacant posts were frozen and then

ADULT EDUCATION FLOOR: FORMAL GATHERINGS IN THE WEEK BEGINNING 17.3.80.

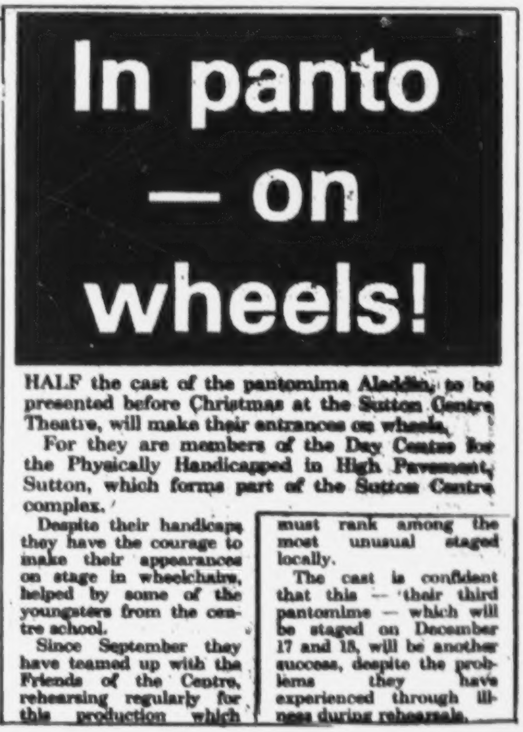
TABLE 10.

DAY	TIME	A16 Miners Rm.	A18 Large	A18 Small	A19	A21	Teachers Centre
MONDAY	9-1	Miners					
	1-4.30	Miners		Maths (6th)	English (6th)	Environmental Studies (t.c.)	Environmental Studies (t.c.)
	4.30-7						
	7-9.30	Russian Cult. (e.m.)	Adult Lit.	Adult Lit.			
TUESDAY	9-1	Miners	N.U.T.	N.U.T.	N.U.T.	Maths. (6th)	N.U.T.
	1-4.30	Miners	N.U.T.	N.U.T.	N.U.T.	Painting LEA	N.U.T.
	4.30-7	Poor Readers		Maths (6th)	English (6th)	Prim. Maths t.c.	Poor Readers
	7-9.30	Ornithology (w.e.a.)				Adult Lit.	Huthwaite Plys.
WEDNESDAY	9-1	Miners	Adult Lit.	Early Retirement (w.e.a.)	Shop Stewards		Early Retirement (W.E.A.)
	1-4.30	Miners		"	Shop Stewards		"
	4.30-7		Geography 6th.			Sociology 6th.	A.G.M.
	7-9.30	Victorian England (w.e.a.)			Adult Lit.		
THURSDAY	9-1	Miners	Maths. (6th)		English (6th)		
	1-4.30	Miners	Maths. (6th)		English (6th)		
	4.30-7						
	7-9.30	Geology (EM)		Video Gp. (em)	Adult Lit.	Study Gp (em)	Guitar (t.c.)
FRIDAY	9-1			Adult Lit.			
	1-4.30			Adult Lit.			Teachers Induction
	4.30-7						
	7-9.30					Adult Lit.	

unfrozen months later as if as a reward for good behaviour.

OUTSIDE SUTTON CENTRE DAY CENTRE.

The Day Centre's response to mounting pressure was to steadfastly maintain "*business as usual*". The cycle of the seasons evenly turned; the regular, and regulating rhythm, in which all members could play a part. Christmas, fo for example, extended over two months. In November came the market to sell produce as Christmas presents and then the Dance at the Devonshire Suite to raise funds for holidays. Then, in December, came the week of lunches and paper hats followed by the Pantomime in the Theatre. Entertainers came in and shopping trips went out. And so on round to Easter Bonnets, Tramps Suppers and Harvest Festivals. The big events were holidays; a week



In panto — on wheels!

HALF the cast of the pantomime Aladdin, to be presented before Christmas at the Sutton Centre Theatre, will make their entrances on wheels.

For they are members of the Day Centre for the Physically Handicapped in High Pavement, Sutton, which forms part of the Sutton Centre complex.

Despite their handicaps they have the courage to make their appearances on stage in wheelchairs, helped by some of the youngsters from the centre school.

Since September they have teamed up with the Friends of the Centre, rehearsing regularly for this production which must rank among the most unusual staged locally.

The cast is confident that this — their third pantomime — which will be staged on December 17 and 18, will be another success, despite the problems they have experienced through illness during rehearsals.

NOTTS.EVENING POST
3.12.79.

abroad in summer, five days in Blackpool for the Lights.[3] The Day Centre opened and closed like an ordinary school.[4] The very regularity of this rhythm tended to conceal the finesse of fund-raising events in between and the near-paralysing exhaustion of a week's shopping and sight-seeing in Holland.

"*Business as usual*" also produced prestigeous results. The swimming club won local and national honours after only three years of practice.[5] The sewing ladies were much in demand to embroider banners after the Queen had graciously accepted a work of art on behalf of the International Year of the Disabled. The Day Centre events were often extended to include school-children and the Clubs, like fishing and drama directly depended upon the leadership of school teachers. The Phab Club on a Friday night was a model of its kind; being manned by volunteers, sponsored by Leisure Services and held in the purpose-built Day Centre. Indeed, the schedule of weekly programmes showed the support which the Day Centre received from Adult Education, School and Leisure Services. (see Table 11).

HIGH PAVEMENT DAY CENTRE

TABLE 11.

WEEKLY PROGRAMME : 1979.

	MORNING	AFTERNOON	EVENING
MON.	Craft Classes Music & Movement Indoor Games	Craft Classes Fishing Club Bingo Indoor Games	
TUES.	Craft Classes Indoor Games Chiropody (fortnightly)	Craft Classes Sailing Club Indoor Games (Inter Centre Friendlies)	Jubilee Sports Club
WED.	Craft Classes Dressmaking for Blind (Education) Indoor Games	Craft Classes Drama Club (Education) Choral Group	Whist Drive.
THURS.	Craft Classes Music & Movement Indoor Games	Craft Classes Choral Group Blind Club	Fifty-Fifty Social Club
FRID.	Craft Classes Indoor Games	Craft Classes Swimming Club Copper Tooling (Adult Educ.) Dressmaking (Adult Educ.)	PHAB Club (Leisure Services)

Craft Classes include:-

Woodwork, metalwork, art, pottery, basketwork, leatherwork, needlework, soft furnishings and toys, macrame, pin & thread, canvas work, etc.

Indoor Games include:-

Snooker, billiards, darts, skittles, scrabble, dominoes, cards, table tennis, chess and ball therapy.

Hairdressing, daily by appointment.

Chiropody Service fortnightly.

Evening Meetings of Advisory Committee - League of Friends - Jubilee Sports Club and Age Concern.

Saturday Use - At present limited to fund raising events, i.e. coffee mornings, Christmas Market, Street Collection Base.

Outings, Parties, Dances, Group Holidays, organised from the Day Centre.

The Youth & Community Officer with young member of PHAB Club.

But the rate of change in membership was very high between(February and November 1979 51 new members were admitted) and attendance almost always problem fraught. There were always relatives eager to have a new member admitted, always G.P.'s who thought there ought to be room for one more. There were usually good reasons (transport, weather conditions, hospital attendance and in-capacitating illness) why those entitled could not actually attend. The actual numbers of registered members entitled to transport varied between 63 and 108 per day in March 1980. But in practice it was rare to see more than 40 people at one time. The recurring question was, therefore, not whether the Day Centre was open but whether it was full or even busy?

When such questions were brought up there were three issues raised which limited the scope for expansion. First how many handicapped people could the care assistants cope with? Secondly, how many "cases" could the Day Centre hold? Thirdly, how suitable was the Centre for the physically handicapped.[6]

At the February 1979 Advisory Committee meeting item 6. was Day Centre usage. The "*to-ing and fro-ing*" is close to the surface in the minutes:

> "*The Occupancy and Transport figures were distributed and discussed at great length. The Secretary reported that there were problems at Hucknall, Selston and Underwood where a large percentage of members were only able to come in once weekly owing to the limited ambulance runs and high proportion of wheelchair-bound members at Hucknall. The proportion of elderly using the Day Centre at the present time was discussed and views aired on future allocation.*
>
> *The Manager reported that she had no one on the waiting list at present, referrals were planned into the Day Centre after visiting and clearance by the Area Social Work Team.*
>
> *The Social Services Director reported on the area of the Day Centre and space allocation per member. He assumed that when*

the size of the Day Centre was planned it was envisaged that 25% usage would be in other joint use areas of Sutton Centre. The Headmaster said he would take this point into account in future but the school itself was over-populated.

The Chairman suggested that Management Services should be asked to come in and investigate the problems of the Day Centre within the complex of Sutton Centre. The Social Services Director confirmed that Management Services were already reviewing Day Centres in the County and he would try and arrange for them to come here before the next meeting.

The Manager reported on the risks and problems involved transporting members in during the snow and icy weather".

The politics of a numbers dispute ensued. The report from Social Services concluded that the occupancy rate had been over-estimated. The report ended:-

"This centre was designed for a maximum capacity of 120 persons (75% physically handicapped, 25% elderly), and is part of the Sutton Town Centre complex. One major aspect of the design was that a percentage of the members would be placed for activity within other parts of the complex, e.g. Adult Education, Home Economics, Craft instruction areas of the school and in the sports complex. Due to the lateness in clearing agreement to use of the total complex, due to problems with building/fire regulations, no use of parts of the complex, other than High Pavement Centre was possible for the first three years of operation. In that time, pupil intake has been so developed as to prevent the original usage by the physically handicapped and elderly to take place other than marginally. The High Pavement Centre itself is too small and has too few toilet facilities to cope with a capacity of 120 and it is therefore suggested that the maximum capacity be reduced to 80."

The suggestion was rejected by the Advisory Committee in March 1980 and a working party set up to explore ways of increasing the actual attendance. This working party had almost the same key membership as another investigative group who were to look into criteria for eligibility. The tensions of these discussions was heightened somewhat by the Area Director of Social Services in the next block becoming the immediate senior of the Day Centre Manager.

Blind man woodworking

The machinations of Review Panels, Advisory Committees and the like were directed towards "*the greater efficiency and service-provision of the Day Centre*".[7]

There were no staffing increases in the Day Centre. In fact, the post of Pottery Instructor, once vacant, was frozen and then consigned to deep storage. Apart from this reduction though, the cuts were a kind of encircling of the Day Centre's routines; almost a poking and prodding at its tested but not necessarily tried routines. The Manager made out a case for being unable to go beyond immediate provision and for limited numbers within that provision. Politicians and professionals tried to have members circulate in the Centre and the real numbers increase. Undoubtedly few members, if any, were aware of the arguments taking place. Their hopes were of small improvements: such as being able to open the door through Recreation Management on their way to dinner. Rather than being for or against extending their privileges they focussed upon practical frustrations which could be overcome. For members had their private troubles, like a determination to walk for the first time or speak sufficiently clearly to be understood. Not far from those playing table-tennis or sanding timber were those whom the spark of life had almost left. Thankfully it was unthinkable that the Day Centre should be cut as Adult Education had been.

Elsewhere in the Country Youth and Community work was being given its share of "*cuts*". Yet in Nottinghamshire the service continued to expand. For where Youth Work was part of "Education" it was put under the same pressure as schools and colleagues. Nottinghamshire's unique arrangement was to Youth and Community's favour - at least for the time being. Down in the Bunker business was booming. The opening hours remained the same as in 1976. There were 15 part-time staff on the books all under the command of one Youth Leader. Other staff included a detached worker away making contacts in pubs and the ice-rink and the loyal women behind the Coffee bar. Monday's disco was the busiest regular event and Friday nights the most pleasant - that is when the "*big ones*" were out.

The Bunker regulars were growing up, they were ageing in the accelerated way their parents had done. There were marriages and/or prams from 1977 onwards. Each year, though, the atmosphere held more tension and aggression. Popular youth styles had become set into gangs of followers. There was no love lost between Rockabilly, Northern Soul and Punk. A few stayed fixed in their styles but more changed from one to the other. Punk emerged as the strongest single identity. This was the first youth style since Hell's Angels to have a near suicidal approach to growing up, to radiate hostility from studded jackets. The biggest group in the Bunker were the nastiest, and from time to time one or more were "*banned out*" for wrecking the toilets or the telephone or threatening part-timers. On their own they were okay but together...... In point of fact, they were Sutton's first easily recognisable unemployed youth. As society's promises of rich rewards became harder to keep Punks voluntarily became disinterested in the pursuit of bright prospects. They sniffed glue in the doorway of the Music Block instead.

OK
MENACE
HEAVY METAL
DISCHARGE

Between 1977 and 1980 the Bunker got a reputation for being a tough place. The emergence of Punk, though, did not become a serious matter until mid-1979. John Clayton, who had been in charge until then, had been set on fulfilling an ambition for more and more activities, more and more spectacular events. Bunker activities combined fund-raising for the Phab and Link Clubs with Bunker members doing things they had never dreamed of. There were the Raft Races across the Reservoir, full of clashes, sinkings and getting stuck in the mud. A visiting German Youth Club gave the opportunity to invite all other clubs in the area. Mutually hostile youth styles were crammed in until their noses touched. The pool team ventured to where no Suttonian had trod before, all black city clubs and pit villages twenty miles away. The formulae combined a good cause with transport and moments of abject terror!

In June 1979 there was the Bath push to Skegness. The Notts. Free Press report showed what strings had been pulled together on this occasion:

> "*BATH night had a special meaning for pupils from Sutton Centre and Ashfield schools on Saturday....they started pushing one from Sutton to Skegness!*
>
> *And 20 gruelling hours later the 16 pushers heaved the bath into Skegness with the rewarding knowledge that they had "tapped" what could be more than £1,500 for their efforts.*
>
> *Together with adult helpers, including employees of Abacus and veteran Sutton walker, Charlie Ellis, they will have gone a long way to providing a caravan for the local Link Club for the Mentally Handicapped.*
>
> *The Bath Brigade left the Bunker at Sutton at 3am on Saturday and girl pupils took turns to make the job a little harder by sitting in the tub all the way.*
>
> *The bath transporter, which was made specially for the run by workers at Abacus, proved a useful collecting box along the route and helped boost the fund raising effort.*
>
> *The young pushers were also sponsored by relatives and friends for the 70 mile trek.*
>
> *After a well earned overnight rest the pupils and helpers had an enjoyable day in the summer sunshine at the East Coast resort.*"

Bath brigade's push for charity

THE BUNKER
NOW!
SUTTON CEN
PUSH A BATH
SUTTON-SKEGNESS

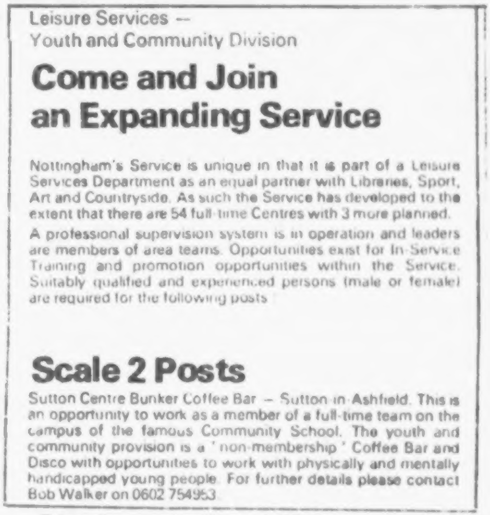
NOTTS.
FREE PRESS
18.5.79.

Page 248.

Charlie Ellis showed the way by raising £353 himself. His technique was simple: he asked sponsors to pay what they wished beforehand as there was no doubt that he would finish the walk. The total sum given to Link Club was £1,650.

The Bath Push had only been an 'idea' one month earlier and had been announced at a Fashion Show for Charity held in the Theatre under the headline *"200 attend Sutton Show"* the report included a mention of *"music from Sutton singer, Neil Keightley"* (see pages 196-8). As with the Bath Push the event combined young people and local firms as co-partners in a production. Involvement was invited in such a way that it was impossible to refuse. At the time of the Charity Show John Clayton, two helpers and 10 youngsters (two severely handicapped) were treking across the desert in Morocco.

In effect, the Youth Leader had tried just about everything it was possible to do. When the Area Officer, his boss, moved, John Clayton got his job. The move was fast, almost fatally fast. The Bunker was left without a leader for nearly six months. The promotion had been a great morale boost for youth leaders because it showed that young go-ahead leaders (John Clayton was then 32) could make it into senior management. It was also open approval for his buccaneering style. But the Bunker part-time staff had to struggle with his absence and his determination not to show favouritism towards his old haunt.


Leisure Services —
Youth and Community Division

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Sutton Centre Bunker Coffee Bar — Sutton in Ashfield. This is an opportunity to work as a member of a full-time team on the campus of the famous Community School. The youth and community provision is a 'non-membership' Coffee Bar and Disco with opportunities to work with physically and mentally handicapped young people. For further details please contact Bob Walker on 0602 754953

First week May 1979

Takings slumped from around £400 a week to £200 a week. The Punks became more provocative and turned on the part-time leaders. The Bunker was often closed because of some misdemeanour and members sheltered from the coming winter in the neighbouring foyer. A central position holds both the seeds of success and failure and enables either to be clearly visible. John Clayton had said that the Bunker's location had always kept him on his toes:

> *"Nobody wants a youth club next to them, its troublesome. Its contestious. Full of energy, good laughs and conflict. There's every chance of things going wrong."*

At the beginning of January 1980 the Recreation Manager, conscious of the need to protect his paying customers, demanded that his front door, the foyer, be cleaned up; patrons were running the gauntlet of displaced Punks who lolled and leered enough to make them sick with fear. The Bunker closed altogether to be redecorated for the new Youth Leader. After just six months the membership had dwindled to twenty or so punks, the same number of darting eleven-year-olds and a stunned silent majority who could still remember how it had been. Youth work is so immediate. What matters is what is happening now and next month. The new leader had a difficult example to follow and a club with a hard core of difficult young men. As he took over John Clayton was commissioning another 'bus, a replacement 'bus paid for by fund-raising and for use by community groups and especially equipped for the handicapped.

This chapter, then, spans from direct cuts and the removal of staff, to pockets of sustained activity - albeit with increased pressure upon them to do more. And yet it closed with a cut of a different kind: the damage done when any highly effective founder-person continued on his, or her, near inevitable career path; damage that can be considerably increased when a replacement is not available for six months. Above all the minor parts were demoralized by the removal and non-replacement of staff. Even so, they still proved themselves capable of traditional and innovative achievements - particularly when it came to novel uses of the Theatre. That adult education parts retained a presence through such a period was a muted but definite success.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: THE SCHOOL: 1977 - APRIL 1978.

> *"The crisis will be over 'O' levels. What's going to happen when he's told to do them".*
>
> *Dr. John Daniels,*
> *May 1977.*

The School was last mentioned in July 1977 when it had been visited by a party of international journalists. All then seemed well with the world and particularly so with the Conservative County Council which had come into power the previous May. Amalgamation with two other sites (their staff and their pupils included) was due to take place that Autumn. Let us begin with what amalgamation actually meant, with the practical and personal problems which it caused.

Eastbourne School, although late Victorian, looked as if it had been a private house built in Georgian times. Around it there were the wooden sheds of a gymnasium and a classroom block. Eastbourne is on Station Road backing onto the Park. Station Road is established Sutton. On the left are pre-war council houses, beyond the junction on the right are pre-war private semi-detached. *"Aristocrats of labour"* on the left, *"Aristocrats of labour"* on the right; the quiet, soft-spoken *'respectables'*.

Westbourne was also an older school, the forbidding barracks kind. It looked every inch of dark, red brick and hard ribbon of mortar like a secondary modern school. It is on the Huthwaite Road, a road of 1930's mock-tudor substance, with new post-war council and private housing behind. These neighbourhoods had jobs similar to those of Station Road but they were later arrivals, and may have been less secure their respectability quite simply being less established.

Two inappropriate buildings then, two buildings where the ethos of Sutton Centre could be resisted by tradition and by the very look and feel of the building itself. Two contrasting neighbourhoods, too. A new class dimension for Sutton Centre. The aspiring workers for whom Westbourne had been successful were being told to abandon the careful programming of Westbourne in favour of what looked like the pot luck of Sutton Centre. They were anxious and often outright hostile and had been so for months. They wanted the spirit if not the substance of Westbourne to live on within Sutton Centre. Under pressure, senior Sutton Centre staff agreed to Westbourne pupils remaining together in tutor groups.

Amalgamation and its decisions brought problems. Only the first year students would have all their teaching at Sutton Centre. The remainder would sometimes be *'bussed'*. For teachers, travelling would be a more difficult matter and they would have their tutor groups in one building and their teaching sessions in another. Theoretically there was no time allowed between tutor group sessions and teaching sessions. Teachers dashed by bicycle and car. Needless to say they resented the pressure. They parked where they could and often on yellow lines. There was more mutual obstruction with the doctors of the health centre, and there were six pound fine notices to be negotiated.

The way of life of the school had stretched people to the limits, and they were now being stretched further by new necessities. They were operating on three sites (four if the playing fields were included). There were 600 additional pupils, and eleven new scale one teachers as well as some ex-Westbourne and Eastbourne staff. The term started with a tremendous surge, as if the school had been super-charged by the addition of so many more units of energy. Each of the literature and drama teachers, for example, began rehearsals for a Christmas production. And it was one drama production in the town library in late September which gave the first public indication that something was not well.

The event was simple enough. It was a full blooded Punch and Judy show performed on a Saturday morning for shoppers and their children. The savage story upset two small children; they cried and their mothers took them out. The incident (a moment almost truly incidental in a week of the town's life) became page one head-line news. Most teachers could not believe that this *'bad publicity'* was significant. But exaggeration is always important. In this case, the Notts. Free Press was reflecting the apprehensive talk in the town. Amalgamation had not been accepted by all and each new story about "*goings on*" fanned the embers of anxiety.

Single incidents are symbolic, they focus the mind on rights and wrongs. A personal relationships teacher was guiding a class of ex-Westbourne pupils through responses to the question "*Why do people swear?*". Pupils wrote down answers and examples. Some took their written work home and one showed it to her mother. The mother had her worst fears confirmed; she concluded that Sutton Centre taught swearing.

The parent contacted other parents and the course director. The meeting with the course director made things worse. After he had contrasted Victorian standards with modern day standards she concluded: "*he told me that I had Victorian standards!*" She was also the manageress of a launderette not 50 yards from the health centre. She spoke with her customers and was overheard by a member of the teaching staff. Stewart Wilson, catching the fever of over-reaction, wrote her a letter which was angrily defiant about slanderous, nasty remarks. Nineteen parents of pupils in the same ex-Westbourne group met together to sign a petition. They met in the living room of an influential local doctor's house.

The doctor's influence flowed from many sources: senior member of the adjacent health centre; husband of a Ratepayer councillor; Ratepayer councillor himself; member of the Community Health Council; member of St. Mary's Church; member of the Joint Sports Centres Management Committee, member of the Day Centre Advisory Council as well as a Sutton Centre school governor. He had invited a Conservative Councillor from Kirkby to hear the parents' complaints. The parents did not know the councillor would be there. The next day the councillor told what he had heard to the County Conservative leader. They decided to take action swiftly, met the parents and told them not to tell the press.

Stewart Wilson was summoned to Council Hall to a meeting with the leader of the Council and the Chairman of the Education Committee at which the Director of Education took notes. He was told that the allegations against the school would be heard by "*an inquiry*" and that he, too, was not to speak to the press.

There had been no governors' meeting since the local elections and the County cancelled the meeting due in early November. Staff governors met with parent governors over a whole weekend to write a letter which demanded to know what was happening. The staff meeting too, drew up a list of pointed questions for County Hall which varied from the complicity of their own governors to the content of allegations. The story broke in the press the next weekend. The "*story line*" was that the County intended to take full responsibility and make an "*in-depth inquiry*" of serious allegations: obviously a '*school for swearing*' had to be stopped.

The sensational press arrived on Monday morning. The Sutton Centre School was on page 3 of the "Sun" again. The report said that worried parents were insisting that the head of personal relationships and the headmaster himself be dismissed. The report implied that there had been trouble over '*sex*' at the school before (page 106/107).There was an avalanche of bad news that week. The building felt as if it were under siege. Coincidentally the first serious spate of vandalism occurred.

During that same week the pupils and parents spontaneously demonstrated their support. School Council circulated a petition which nearly all pupils signed. The theatre was packed for an emotional meeting at which parent after parent testified to their appreciation of the school's effect on their children and their family life. Stewart Wilson promised to stand firm and maintain the innovations that had come to mean so much to parents.[1]

THE SUN, Wednesday, November 30, 1977 3

FOUR-LETTER LESSON' SCHOOL SCANDAL

By BRIAN DIXON and BARRIE MATTEI

A TEACHER gave his mixed class of 13-year-olds a lesson in four-letter swear words. He wrote them on a blackboard and then explained their meaning, angry parents claimed yesterday.

Then the children had to copy the words, which included slang for sexual acts, homosexuals and lesbians, the parents added.

The blackboard bungle took place at Sutton Centre School in Sutton-in-Ashfield, Notts — the comprehensive where a teacher was sacked two years ago after reading teenagers a story of his sexual exploits.

Now an action group of 31 parents is calling for the:

SACKING of teacher Alan Beardsley for giving the swear-word lesson;

FIRING of department head Brian Keywood for planning the lesson in a curriculum called Personal Relationships;

DISMISSAL of headmaster Stewart Wilson for supporting the teachers.

One parent, Mrs Kathleen Dunning, said: "I was horrified when I found notes of the lesson in my daughter Tracey's homework book.

"The school has wiped out 13 years of moral upbringing with this orgy of dirty language."

Blame

Another mother, Mrs Lily Calvert, said: "When my daughter Deborah arrived in class the letter F and three blanks were on the blackboard. There were eight other words.

"Before the end of the lesson the teacher filled in all the blanks.

"He rubbed them off quickly after asking the class if they understood them. He said he had to rub them off in case someone came in."

Mr Roy Johnson, aged 41, has kept his son Paul off school for the past three weeks following the lesson.

Stewart Wilson . . . "gagged" by education authority

He said: "I have told the education authorities that alley cats have better morals than those which are being taught.

Notts County Education Authority—who run the 1,500 pupil school—have promised the shocked parents a full inquiry into the incident.

Gagged

The headmaster and two teachers have refused to comment. Mr Wilson said he had been "gagged" by education bosses.

But in a letter to parents whose children attended the swearing class, he wrote: "The examples were not given by the teacher, nor were any pupils compelled to read, write or explain meanings."

Just going into the building was acknowledged as a gesture of loyalty and resistance. Day time and eleventh session figures significantly increased. Tutor Group areas and decorations became more extensive and elaborate. Students worked more nearly alongside teaching staff than they had done previously. The 5th form - the first 5th form of fully Sutton Centre pupils - all had the same tutors with whom they had begun. They took their seniority very seriously. It was as though everyone in the 5th form had been made a '*prefect*'.

The Teachers' Unions did not want a purely local enquiry. The teachers, if anything, wanted their own appointees to investigate the allegations. H.M.I. stepped in. There would be two enquiries, one by H.M.I.'s and the other by the County's appointees. By Christmas that was all that was known of the next term's stresses. The theatre productions produced a fortnight of entertainment.

The authority had made its feelings plain; Sutton Centre was out of favour. The '*protesting parents*' represent 11 children out of over 1500. Four of their number were spokespeople and were corresponding and talking with the Press. All had requested that their children be removed from Sutton Centre and go to a more traditional school. The request had been granted and would take effect in the New Year. The Notts Free Press had thought that once the issue was opened it would become a popular cause: it had assumed that a mildly anti-Sutton Centre line was the right one to take. Its postbag in one week, though, was 97 letters *'in favour'* and 4 *'against'*. The Notts Free Press changed its line into an insistence of not damaging the good work which had been done and insisting upon fair play. Stewart Wilson spoke to the Press too, but only the Notts Free Press and the Northern edition of the Nottingham Evening Post carried his carefully chosen words. So many tensions had been tightened into polar positions: that of the County's Conservative south and the Socialist north; Sutton Centre and its amalgamees; Sutton Town's respectable and aspiring groups; the teaching profession's division over traditional and innovative methods; Sutton's influential towns people and the challenge to them from Stewart Wilson, his charisma and his egalitarian philosophy.

The end of term cabaret was, as ever, a barometer of the Centre's climate. There were over three hours of hilarity as if to indicate united we stand and we shall only fall when doubled up with laughter. Tutor group parties had ranged all over the Centre for a week as students too, had their moment of near frenzied farewell. Within themselves, staff and students knew there would be changes in the New Year; between each other they showed the strength of support required to survive. The biggest bonus came from a truly simple truth; teachers, parents and pupils just did not feel guilty. There had been quite intense self and collective criticism openly expressed for years but that had been to make things better, not because they have been going from bad to worse. In essence there was confidence, when the Inspectorate came into the building they would be met by people who had a fair taste of their own success. The sad thing was that no new Suttonians would join in until the whole thing had blown over.

On the first day of the new term, Stewart Wilson announced that he would leave at Easter. He had been asked to open a new community school in Livingston, outside Edinburgh. It was so hard for teachers and parents to make sense of this news. Only months beforehand Stewart Wilson had been saying that it took a generation to consolidate community education, that with five children of his own there was still at least another ten years of there being a Wilson-junior at the school, that he liked the town very much and that he was prepared to stay and see "*the job*" through. What, then, changed his mind?

He gave two reasons, both of which had existed a few months previously. The first was that the building had been financed in two stages but it was still not complete, nor was completion in sight. The second was the principle of management. He said, "*joint management is doomed to failure because with the best will in the world if you get two or more people running a centre like Sutton Centre, the chances of them always agreeing on fundamental matters of principle and philosophy are negligible.....Even if the individuals on the management team agree the chances of their parent bodies agreeing are even more remote.*"

He was incensed at the obstacles to a common commitment during the first three years. The speech he gave continued with: "*The public in Sutton were denied access to our magnificent recreation facilities for over a year because the district council would not see eye-to-eye with the county council over fire regulations, and the handicapped people were penned back into their Day Care Centre by a social services committee which no doubt wished to demonstrate its muscle on the pretext that the building which their people had been using for over a year had suddenly become a high fire risk.*

It is no use some sections seeing the Centre being opened to all sections of the community, the rough as well as the smooth, if other sections are playing it safe. It was this frustration - the frustration of seeing the need for one clear policy for Sutton Centre and the impossibility of ever achieving it on the present management structure which finally persuaded me to *accept this new post in Scotland with overall control of the complex and one parent body. But even then, leaving a place like Sutton Centre which becomes a way of life is one hell of a wrench."*

Stewart Wilson would be taking the head of Communications and Resources and the chaplain with him. Courage and convictions can stand so much but under constant battering one or the other can give.

Privately, and not without feeling guilty, teachers began to apply for other jobs. Stewart Wilson's decision blew like a strong wind on a dandelion head. There would be the dispersal of staff pursuing their own careers. And they stood a good chance having been at a celebrity school.

The school prepared to be inspected. The local newspapers had gone quiet now. It was as though the trial date having been set the matter had become subjudice. The national media spoke briefly in January. Their messages were the same. They spoke in favour of a trial by peers rather than a trial by ordeal, their position was that there should be fair play between the two evenly matched sides. No doubt the attention of the national media had influenced the County Council sufficiently to allow an H.M.I. inspection. In that sense the school became more evenly matched with the employer. But at the same time the even balance went against the school as it had done when the Notts Free Press printed four letters for the school and four letters against it. The protesting parents had removed their children, and so now, at least openly, there were four absentee opponents being evenly balanced against hundreds of supporters. The opposing parents had actually already got almost all of what they wanted. Their children had left and Stewart Wilson was leaving. They waited to be called to testify without anything like the level of concern with which they had begun.

The governing body was at last summoned, and the staff governors were promptly asked to leave. The Director of Education asked the parent governors to accept Mr. Tom King as the next headmaster. In the Director's opinion it was vital that a new head be appointed, a local man, highly successful in another of the authority's schools and above all a man trusted by the authority. Tom King could take over straight after Easter. The parent governors hesitated and were then persuaded. There was no other item on the agenda. The Director had exercised his right to use emergency powers and had achieved a remarkable feat.

The National Union of Teachers objected to the absence of due process but on this occasion their objection was wholly ignored. The Union was, in the same month, preparing industrial action in support of a pay claim at national level; at local level relations with the employers were rapidly deteriorating. Eighty community teachers in primary schools were also going to be subjected to an inquiry. The library book expenditure had been eliminated entirely for the whole financial year. Teachers' representatives on the council's education committee came in for some menacing scorn. The arbitrary appointment of one headmaster was more a matter of irritating proof than a cause for crusade.

By mid-February the two inquiries were over. Seventeen H.M.I.'s spent a week in the school. They had observed classes, read course work material and spoken with teachers and pupils. They had been most enthusiastic over the mass of paperwork which allowed them to study how the curriculum had developed. They had doubts. The geographer worried that environmental studies failed to make his subject distinctive. The linguist and the physical education specialist both felt that the 'blocking' of their subjects inhibited sensible development. Their chairman wanted to know about the catchment area but not about the social class of parents. Overall, however, there were few doubts and many words of appreciation expressed to teachers during that week.

The '*kids*' it was generally agreed, were just '*great*'! They had been cheerful and cheeky, helpful and happy; they might even have enjoyed having special visitors for a week! The previous term's confidence seemed justified for surely the H.M.I.'s could not have found that much really to object to? Stewart Wilson congratulated his staff in the light of a report he had been compiling himself that week. He read out the telegrams and messages of support from schools both far and near. There was a "*camaraderie of the trenches*" developing along the front line of innovative education.

The inquiry which the authorities created for themselves stayed away from the school altogether. The Chairman and three people met in Sutton Baths Lounge to hear evidence on eleven allegations. They were the ex-S.U.D.C. Clerk, the Chairman of the Regional Economic Development Council, a Bishop, and a Nottingham University Professor of Education. Four parents in favour and four parents against were invited to attend. The NUT refused to participate, the NAS/UWT sent an observer. Many of the allegations focused on Stewart Wilson himself. For example, one complaint was that he sent his own daughter to study 'O' level at another school. He replied that his daughter was the only Centre pupil taking 'A' level English and he couldn't justify one teacher just for her. She attended Sutton Centre for all her other subjects. The parents were complaining about children not being allowed to take 'O' levels.

The committee settled to their task with gusto. Indeed they laughed and joked all day. In the late afternoon they said quite plainly that they should never have been called and that the allegations should never have been heard or listened to and that they had no substance. The protesting parents felt humiliated. Each time they had tried to bring up the question of learning "*about swearing*" they had been told that it was not one of the allegations. By the end of the afternoon they thought that most of the laughter had been at their expense. The independent inquiry came and went in a day.

The NUT industrial action began. There were to be no working parties and no dinner-time duties. This would mean that, at Sutton Centre, 1500 children would be emptied out of the school and into the town. The pupils did not want this to happen and the School Council put forward an alternative. School Council representatives would take responsibility for their own teaching area; that is tutor groups would discipline themselves. If they were allowed to remain in the building then they would give an undertaking that no harm would come to it. Stewart Wilson and the staff meeting agreed to this.

Both the building and the town centre no doubt benefitted from the arrangement. This agreement came in the midst of turmoil. It meant that the students were carrying the culture onwards; despite being temporarily deserted by head and staff. They could innovate in the interest of the school. One brief example of this was their handling of the dinner time discos.

As resident researcher, I was walking down from the office and was stopped by two 4th formers. They asked me would I run the disco as the withdrawal of dinner time staff threatened to stop their event. I agreed. I was taken up to the deputy's office and given a role of tickets and a biscuit tin, and then down to the disco. There were five girls resting against the wall. The main lights went off and the coloured bulbs began to flash. Boys and girls began to stream in through the door. Each paid 2p and was given a ticket by the two boys who had been waiting there when I arrived. I was brought a hamburger so that I did not have to leave my station.

There must have been 80 or 90 people there. The floor was full of girls dancing and I could make out brief movements in the shadows beyond. The main light flashed. *"Put that fag out Billy"* said the DJ. *"Come on, I can see you"*. The beat went on. *"Come on now Billy, there will be no more of this until you do!"*. It must have been put out.

The lights flashed again, *"Last one now, what will it be?"*. There was so much shouting of choices that it was impossible to tell if anybody had actually got their request. The lights went on *"OK, that's it, we'll have to go now"*. They slipped away as swiftly as they had come. The roll of tickets and the biscuit tin were put back in my hand. *"Just count the money and put a* *note on Bob's desk"* he said. "*It's for school funds"*. I did, there was more money than the tickets accounted for, they had obviously been more keen to get the money than to give out the tickets. That 2p per person, Tuesday's dinner time disco raised £2.32. Also present had been one passing adult; inserted like a life size photograph into the space normally occupied by teachers voluntarily. It was the pupils who reminded us of what was done at Sutton Centre. The pupils carried many distraught teachers along with their expectations of what was normal and usual at school.

Staff and parents were waiting for the H.M.I.'s report. It had been promised "*as soon as possible*". In the last week of term hopes were raised by rumours that there would be a press release. Mrs. Shirley Williams let it be known that while there were some "*justified areas of concern*" the inspectors had cleared the school of any charges of bad education. Indeed the inspectors were actually enthusiastic, they had been impressed by the vitality.

The H.M.I.'s report was very strong indeed. The Inspectors had measured a "*contact time*" of 82%. This measurement indicated that teachers were with pupils 4/5's of their own time at school. This statistic was at least 10% more than had ever been found at any school before.

The "*justified area of concern*" was the refusal of the school to do 'O' levels; preventing, that is, the pupils to enter public examinations should they or their parents so wish. This had been one of the eleven allegations. The County Council Education Committee had already passed a resolution that all schools should offer 'O' levels and so the release noted that the change was in hand in this respect. The H.M.I. report did not mention swearing either. The pressure upon the school had moved away from an "*offending*" piece of the curriculum towards insisting that a central examination decision be changed. The headmaster would be forced to implement 'O' levels, which would, in turn, dismantle the concept of total mixed ability groups in all subjects, particularly in the upper years. In any event, this and the other significant change happened before both enquiries found the school innocent and indeed exemplary. There would bea new headmaster transferred in after Easter to replace one who had elected to go before the *'trial'* and there would be '0' levels. The protesters who by now felt that they had been used fell silent, the staff felt that they had been stabbed in the back. The National Press reported on the press release, as a success to be welcomed; a happy ending.

Stewart Wilson's leaving was a happy ending. The Sports Hall was full as he recalled his five years at Sutton Centre, thanked those with whom he had worked and asked them to join him at the front. Cleaning ladies made their way with bags of weekend shopping, Uncle Jim got the loudest cheer, more and more staff and parents joined Stewart Wilson at the front. The parade - it was almost a transfer of the audience from one side of the stage to the other - lasted half an hour. Stewart Wilson's last words to the pupils were "Remember now, be back on the 12th April at 8.45 prompt." The present-giving went on in the afternoon and evening. Stewart Wilson had part of his profile read out to him. Like that evening's cabaret, it must have left him in no doubt that he was held in an affection by a band of astute critics, and that at the moment of greatest unity he had said good wishes and good-bye.

All the same the school had endured a drastic demoralization.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: THE SCHOOL: 1978-1980.

> *"It would seem that the great education in the sky would not be unlike Sutton in Ashfield".*
>
> *MacBeath.*[1]

Having spoken privately to the vast majority of the staff before taking up his appointment, the new Head, Tom King, asked for photographs of all to take on holiday with him over the Easter holiday. This was to enable him to match the names with the faces of his new colleagues. Getting to know the staff was his first priority. He returned with a deep brown Maltese tan which made him look yet more foreign in his new surroundings. In fact he had impeccable local connections. He could argue from the beginning that he knew Sutton and that he knew what Suttonians really thought and truly wanted.

Tom King was almost the opposite of Stewart Wilson. He was the fully fledged local, as distinct from the high flying cosmopolitan. He was born within five miles of the Centre, had lived in the catchment area and was now living three miles from the Centre in Kirkby-in-Ashfield. He had taught in the Ashfield area for twenty-four years. Five of those years had been spent in Sutton-in-Ashfield as both head and deputy of two neighbouring Sutton schools. He had also worked as an assistant adult education supervisor in Sutton-in-Ashfield, overseeing adult education classes in the Centre from the beginning.

After leaving school at fifteen years of age, he had served his apprenticeship as a joiner gaining a Full Technological Certificate of the City and Guilds which enabled him to join the emergency training scheme for craft teachers. Later he had obtained part time, over six years, two advanced Diploma in secondary and religious education from the University of Nottingham. He had graduated from the Open University with a B.A. Degree. On being appointed deputy head of the Westbourne School, the highly experienced head teacher encouraged Tom King to become a head himself. The head taught him his particular style of management. He promoted from within.

He delegated the daily round of paperwork by giving it out to his deputy.

Tom King was to become the head of two schools housed in old buildings. Each time he had improved their appearance and bolstered their morale. The parents often liked and respected his style; he put pride back into the school. The staff, too, were grateful for their rewards; their enhanced statures became an indication of renewed vigour. Tom King received yet more gratitude from parents as the staff began to pull together as a team.

Tom King was also well connected. He had personal friends in the Sutton Rotary Club. His sister was married to the leader of the Nottinghamshire Labour Group. He was a Sunday School Superintendent of long standing. The Education Professor on the Enquiry taught at his school for one afternoon a week. He knew, at first hand, each fibre of the polarities which centered upon the school. He could claim to have followed Sutton Centre's progress since it had been a sketch on a drawing pad.

His intentions were the subject of staff anxiety and press speculation. The ambiguous headline of the Notts Free Press during his first week read, "*No promises for Sutton Centre*". The headline seemed doom-laden. In the text Tom King explained sensibly that he was going to visit and see and not promise any changes as yet.

He had an obvious list of things to do and probably he had a less obvious one too. It was '*obvious*', for example, that 'O' levels would have to be introduced. At the other end of a scale of size he gave out blue and red biros for marking presences and absences in the register which indicates that he possibly thought the record-keeping was slack. Behind this small gesture there was the town's small talk about children wandering around the shops when they should have been at their lessons.

Conversely, there were changes popular in other schools which he was happy to implement. The Sutton Centre Users' Association had become divided into the parents and the '*rest*' by the enquiry. There had always been a parents' section but now it was so large and preoccupied with threats and promises that it took on an independent form. The parents' section had become a PTA with the Head as President.

He spoke to staff meetings as head and chairman and staff spoke back to him through the chair. He made a fundamental change without realising it just by assuming that the head was automatically the giver of agenda, orders and answers. As the business of the enquiry was not yet over, he took "*the need for strong leadership*" upon himself. The actual reports were not due to be received until May.

The reception at County Hall of the H.M.I.'s report, and that of the independent inquiry, had gone very badly. When the matter came up in an Education Sub-committee, the deputy leader of the Conservative group launched an attack on the standards of teaching in general and the qualities of teachers in particular. He said in a page one banner headline phrase, "*teachers have the morals of pigs*". The report said: he alleged that "*uneducated so called sex-perts*" were teaching children to have sex outside marriage. The Union representative went into an uproar as did the Labour councillors. Councillor Bird would not withdraw his remarks and the meeting abruptly ended.

The Labour Group had tabled a motion of support for the School Staff to be debated at May's Education Meeting. They retold the story, said none of it should have happened and complained bitterly over the damage done to the school's image and morale. The Conservative members stayed silent throughout. Neither report was described, discussed or debated fully by anyone outside of the governing body. Five H.M.I.'s and their chairman returned to review their findings. They were genuinely concerned that teachers did not have the opportunity to "*replenish their vision and inspiration*". "*Such true dedication*" concluded the Chairman of the Governors. H.M.I. s had said that the school was '*good*' rather than '*bad*' and had scraped some raw nerve ends at County level. '*Good*' things, would have to remain or at least still be recognisable to H.M.I.s in the future.

What a dilemma for the head then. Praise from educationalists for innovations of great intricacy and complexity. County Councillors with egg on their face. Townspeople, its middle-class and merchants that is, who were not to be antagonised further by "a *school on the streets*". Parents who had been right behind Stewart Wilson and know the school's layout and rationale as well as the staff upon whom praise had been heaped.

Tom King wisely left more aspects alone that summer. No discussions on uniforms yet, no breaking down of the block timetable yet, nor changes of course titles. As summer approached, the multi-coloured programme of suspended weeks once again unfolded. And it did not look as if Tom King would change that at all. The old '*magic*' worked just as well as before. Again, over a quarter of students chose to do Maths all week and some fifth formers were up to 'A' level standard already.

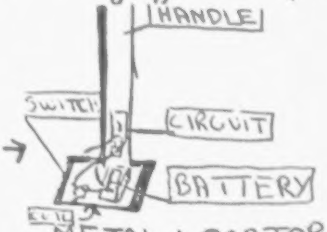
Tom King had had a very difficult term. Outside of ex-Westbourne staff he had no teacher allies. Many of his moves had been frustrated by Sutton Centre practices; not least by a staff which believed that they could discuss and argue on everything. Teachers were that much harder upon him because he had chosen to take the job when it was offered. Twelve more staff were going to leave, almost all of whom had made pointed remarks straight at him. One said "*I just don't want to see this place become bog comprehensive 1,839*". Some departees descended to cursing that which they were leaving behind, even after having given and taken so much. The County Council and its officials very much left him to it, which also left him very much alone. His biggest problem was the utter contrast of the present with his past experience. Here was a '*good*' school which should not go down. For a year or two he was going to be regularly compared with Stewart Wilson.

SUSPENDED WEEK : CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS.

I am afraid it did not hover but I am trying to improve it.

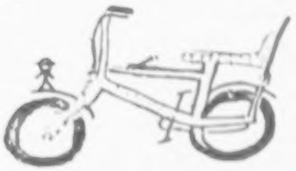
I set out to make my bike better than before

I set out to build a metal detector →



METAL LOCATOR

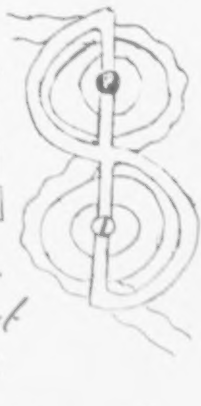
On the second day I tried my hovercraft on water but it sank.



It took me ten minutes to get my spring clip off the chain. I was just going to ask Mervyn when I did it.

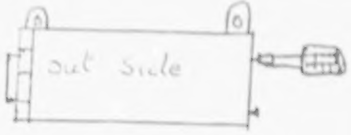
The bracket came off the axel. I managed to mend it taking the spokes off and whelding it back.

I set out to make a small moped using a bike a starter motor, and a car battery.



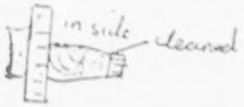
Derraileur Gears

I think that it was too heavy a body of polystyrene for the body weight it should be. Next time it will be a balsa wood body.



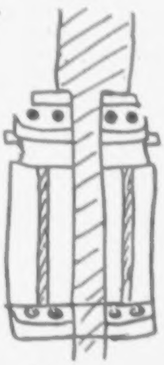
On Friday I completed my bike and oiled it. I must say I ENJOYED it VERY much.

A Windmill Generator



with the motor attached it still rose slightly but scraped the floor with the tip of it's skirt.

We got two of the Radios to work.



Motor bearings

The main problem was getting the motor shaft into the pedal bearings.

WHAT WE SET OUT TO DO.
WHAT WE MADE,
AND WHETHER IT WORKED.

After three more C. and R. teaching staff had left and one transferred out, the two remaining staff were told to base themselves at Eastbourne and do most of their teaching there. There they continued to improve C. and R.'s essential message. Poster work, for example, upon the titles "*Can They Forgive?*" and "*There Are More Questions Than Answers*" showed a maturity of graphic design, quite different from painting by copying books and postcards. The department *'closed'* when one teacher left to become a youth worker and the other was transferred to Environmental Studies.

The reprographics function for both the school and the community no longer had any teaching support. The machinery remained and two young women technicians were still responsible for the issuing, maintenance and usage of a lot of expensive equipment. The C. & R. Department bequeathed a high quality photocopier and paper-plate maker as they closed. The table top offset litho machine was added to by another as the Teachers' Centre took charge of a machine from a Northern Centre which had been closed.

Reprographics, both photocopying and offset litho, had become big business. The *'school work'* copying was half or even less of the total volume, indeed only Recreation failed to make use of the facility. Meanwhile Social Services, for example, regularly incurred bills of £80 or more a month. The usage was so great that (even with the less than economic charge made) the wages of the reprographics technician were virtually covered - making her of little or no cost to the school whatsoever. In addition there was the benefit of being able to cheaply print so much material for the school when the book allowance had been removed and the general allowance had been reduced. Each week, too, there was the Sutton Centre Bulletin, made up of signed material, and still being printed for every tutor group and every section in the Centre. The headmaster's newsletter upon the new notepaper now headed " "Sutton Centre School" was also a regular 1,500 print-run. There was a mountain of work going through the print room.

Both technicians, the secretary/course-material maker/video-maker/equipment issuer, and the woman in the print room became directly answerable to the head. A group of postgraduate students, on an Educational Management Post-graduate Course at Trent Polytechnic, who studied Communications and Resources, commented that there was no maintenance and replacement schedule and that each woman clung to her immediate space around their respective machines to get what little job security they could.

The head responded to this report by drafting in a teacher with electronics expertise for four sessions a week to make an inventory for renewal and to repair whatever he could. The latter decision produced spectacular success; all kinds of machines were made to work again. When not in use the machines were locked away, they were now issued to teachers only. There was no longer innovation coming from C. and R., but then again it did not actually disappear. It was reduced from an organic entity to a mechanical function, and that part made to work better than it had been. C. and R. was the biggest single change which Tom King made.

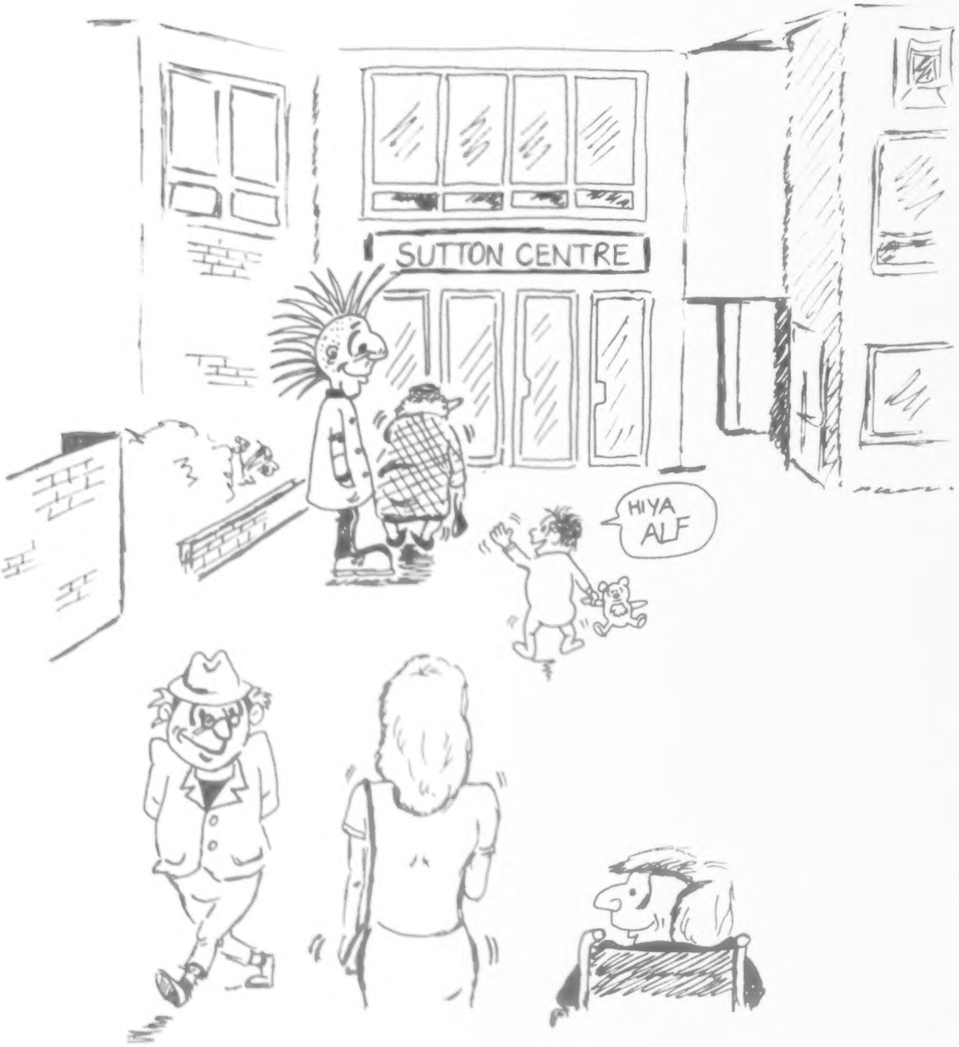
The sixth form were the problem which had precipitated the demise of C. and R. First they occupied the adult lounge next door to the miners' room on the adult education floor. They brought their stereo set with them. The stereo set was up against the miners' room wall. The sixth form expected to occupy their area in the evenings, in effect to have informal eleventh sessions of their own. The classes in the miners' room had responsible tutors. The sixth form quite often did not. There were complaints about '*noise*'. Adults, with the tensions of their precious time, felt somewhat beseiged by young people making sounds of having all the time in the world. Their complaints echoed the Recreation Manager's views on spectating youth. The sixth form moved to the Staff Room.

The Staff Room did not feel like a normal staff room and it looked as if it was hardly ever used. After four years of doing without, or using the Teaching Centre, or the Dining Hall, or squashing into departmental offices, the staff no longer needed a Staff Room (or at least not for themselves). Through the Centre Coordinating Committee, which Tom King was keen to see continue, all Centre staff were asked to look upon the room as theirs. A few actually did. But dinner time was literally an hour long and teachers were combining having a meal with being on duty, or with being on duty voluntarily, and travelling from East to West blocks (as Eastbourne and Westbourne were now known). The sixth form had the large and comfortable space virtually to themselves.

Evening usage of the Staff Room, directly above Recreational Management's offices, was less easy to accept. For then, the sixth form had a great deal of privacy, if not too much. Moreover, the sixth form still needed a tutor area which would also be their teaching area. The old C. & R. floor became the sixth form study and social area just as the building's plans had suggested.

Another significant change was the creation of Kelvin's group. Kelvin was a Sport and Leisure teacher: tough, firm and good-natured. Kelvin's group were fifth formers who were '*difficult*' and they met up at East Block. The creation of this disruptive unit followed another of the County's policies. The County had decided to decrease normal expenditure and increase special expenditure. There were to be two disruptive-pupil units and one school for high flyers. One disruptive-pupil unit would be in Mansfield. It would take disruptive pupils, the most truculent from each school in the north of the county, and treat them with a determined discipline.

Kelvin's group began in September 1980 and its creation signalled the end of mixed ability tutor groups and C.S.E.s for all in the fifth year. It meant that some fourth year pupils would actually be keen to get into it. The majority were boys; and members of the emergent Bunker skinhead, punk and glue-sniffing gangs. The Bunker's



problems of these gangs becoming too dominant were added to by Recreation's anxieties on the one side and the School's action of separating them out on the other. The creation of Kelvin's group was unpopular with many teachers who thought that mixed ability tutor groups was a principle which ought never to be violated, even for football teams and similar important matters.

The school was so big that teachers saw little of each other beyond those in their department and through their year-group tutor meetings. Tom King encouraged year-group tutor meetings by making three senior masters the heads of two or more year bands. The effect of this was to make the general staff meeting less important, and staff attendance began to fall and become dependent upon how long staff were prepared to stay. The contrast of how staff expected matters to be discussed was so strong that it inspired a sharp and sustained reaction. Papers were circulated. The agenda sub-committee scheduled the next staff meeting as a discussion on the staff meeting itself. After six months of proposals referring to cabinets and quorums it was accepted that there would be two staff meetings thereafter. One would be an information meeting at which the Head spoke; the other would be a discussion meeting at which serious decisions would be debated.[2] This arrangement formalized in a two part fashion the original Stewart Wilson approach.

The atmosphere amongst teachers became less consistent. There was dismay among some long serving members and a welcome for a tighter regime amongst others. Staff left in appreciable numbers as each term ended. The County policy was to recruit only from the ranks of its existing employees for all positions below Head Teacher. There was a wave of local recruitment. For such recruits Sutton Centre could be a rung on their ladder, their commitment accordingly more conditional. Generally speaking they gave greater emphasis to being a good subject teacher than they did to being a good tutor. The frequency of home visits was less. Conversely there were more departmental parents' evenings.

In the summer term of 1979 the deputy head (community) made a survey of the extent of tutors' home visits. Those who had been in post longer were, on average, making more than ten visits a term in their own time and at their own expense. Their replies revealed a learning process too. In their first year, they had *'sold'* and *'defended'* the

Centre. In their second year they had got to know more about the family and felt more able to assess and influence its effects on their tutees. In their third year, they had turned their emphasis towards learning about local circumstances to which they could refer in their own teaching. The survey itself was a prompt for greater attention to be given to home visits. Its results went beyond the effects of moral pressure because they explained to new recruits something about one of the processes in which they were becoming involved.

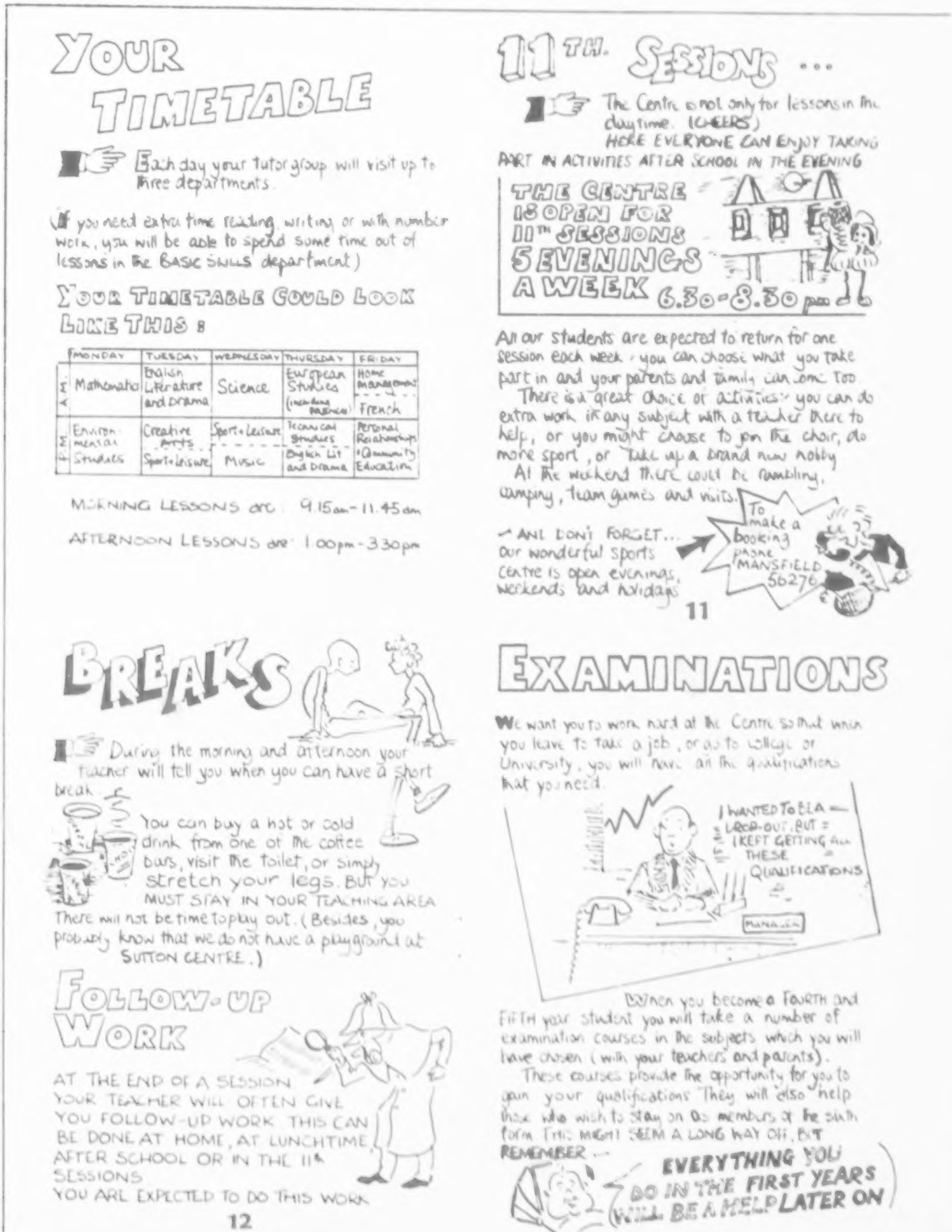
Another deputy head focused attention upon profiles. These were revised so that it was plain who was writing to whom - teacher to pupil, teacher to parent, and so on. This modification countervailed the tendency towards bland and vague remarks. The working party also produced a school leaving report form by which employers could read a summary of the profile of five years of experience. The sixth form were allowed to discontinue profile writing altoether.

In effect, when that which did not change is looked at closely, modifications and improvements are often to be found. The point is that certain false divisions occurred, there was the re-emergence of the obstacles which Stewart Wilson had been at pains to identify in 1972. These were the divisions to which any large secondary school is prone and which are all the more likely when economic pressure means everyone has to work so much more. The divisions led to the school breaking up into more manageable units, year bands, departments and teaching blocks. They were divisions which weakened the staff collectively and meant that junior positions were at the very bottom of a number of piles. The divisions meant that the effort of each teacher was more and more dependent upon individual will on the one hand and recognition by the Head on the other.

The sheer size of the school probably meant that some such division was essential if the school was to continue to improve. To critics, though, the emergence of divisions favoured piecemeal and technical changes. H.M.I.s had highlighted problems that provoked divisions, too; the use of the *'amalgamated'* buildings and the way languages was taught - especially the time allocated to it. Growing divisions, however, must be set against their backcloth of continuities.

The Welcome Booklet was completely redrawn and its tongue in cheek humour confidently put the Centre's message:-

WELCOME BOOKLET 1980 EDITION



YOUR TIMETABLE

Each day your tutor group will visit up to three departments.

(If you need extra time reading, writing or with number work, you will be able to spend some time out of lessons in the BASIC SKILLS department)

YOUR TIMETABLE COULD LOOK LIKE THIS:

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
A.M.	Mathematics	English Literature and Drama	Science	European Studies (including FRENCH)	Home management French
P.M.	Environmental Studies	Creative Arts Sport + Leisure	Sport + Leisure Music	Technical Studies English Lit and Drama	Personal Relationships + Community Education

MORNING LESSONS are 9.15am - 11.45am

AFTERNOON LESSONS are 1.00pm - 3.30pm

11TH. SESSIONS ...

The Centre is not only for lessons in the daytime. (CHEERS)
HERE EVERYONE CAN ENJOY TAKING PART IN ACTIVITIES AFTER SCHOOL IN THE EVENING

THE CENTRE IS OPEN FOR 11TH SESSIONS 5 EVENINGS A WEEK 6.30 - 8.30 pm

All our students are expected to return for one session each week - you can choose what you take part in and your parents and family can come too.

There is a great choice of activities - you can do extra work in any subject with a teacher there to help, or you might choose to join the choir, do more sport, or take up a brand new hobby.

At the weekend there could be rambling, camping, team games and visits.

— AND DON'T FORGET... our wonderful sports centre is open evenings, weekends and holidays

To make a booking phone MANSFIELD 56276

11

BREAKS

During the morning and afternoon your teacher will tell you when you can have a short break.

You can buy a hot or cold drink from one of the coffee bars, visit the toilet, or simply stretch your legs. BUT YOU MUST STAY IN YOUR TEACHING AREA. There will not be time to play out. (Besides, you probably know that we do not have a playground at SUTTON CENTRE.)

FOLLOW-UP WORK

AT THE END OF A SESSION YOUR TEACHER WILL OFTEN GIVE YOU FOLLOW-UP WORK. THIS CAN BE DONE AT HOME, AT LUNCHTIME, AFTER SCHOOL OR IN THE 11th SESSIONS.
YOU ARE EXPECTED TO DO THIS WORK

12

EXAMINATIONS

We want you to work hard at the Centre so that when you leave to take a job, or go to college or University, you will have all the qualifications that you need.

I WANTED TO BE A DROP-OUT, BUT I KEPT GETTING ALL THESE QUALIFICATIONS
MANAGER

When you become a FOURTH and FIFTH year student you will take a number of examination courses in the subjects which you will have chosen (with your teachers and parents).

These courses provide the opportunity for you to gain your qualifications. They will also help those who wish to stay on as members of the sixth form. THIS MIGHT SEEM A LONG WAY OFF, BUT REMEMBER —

EVERYTHING YOU DO IN THE FIRST YEARS WILL BE A HELP LATER ON

13

Eleventh sessions continued much as before. There was still no written contract to the effect that teachers worked a ten session week, one of which was in the evening or at the weekend. Nevertheless, new recruits fell into line and County support (the 10% additional staffing allowance) was neither reduced or withdrawn. Overall, there were more vocational courses and twilight (3.30-5.30) sessions. The former enabled 'O' levels to be introduced without re-arranging mixed ability groups. The latter made the school more continuous than it had been previously. More significant still was the percentage of participating adults rising from 8% to 16% - from a tenth to a fifth. In part, this increase came from adults denied L.E.A. classes. In part, too, the idea was attracting more parents and neighbours than it had previously. Mathematics remained as popular as ever whilst elsewhere new topics were pioneered. The attendances in 1979/80 were close to 20,000 (See Appendix 31). There were fewer recorded attendances in the library but that was because the new librarian was an enthusiast for study as distinct from *'playing about and chatting'*. Thus by 1980, the provision of eleventh sessions had the status of a tradition. Instead of homework, there was voluntary follow-up work which proved to be most popular with the youngest and oldest age groups.

The same could be said of suspended weeks whose significance was certainly not lost upon the new recruits. The atmosphere in the school - when teachers had chosen to work alone or with each other and pupils found their choice had thoroughly mixed up tutor groups and ages doing *"First Aid"* or *"Humour and Comedy"* or whatever - was one of benign ease. The ease also came from so many choices involving being away from the Centre. It was possible for those remaining to see what the school felt like when it was not crowded in every area. Chance conversations often brough the remark that *"it should be like this all the time"*.

The Notts Free Press was beginning to publish articles on the school's successes. The choir was winning competitions

TOP NOTES AT CENTRE

Notts Free Press
7.12.79. - p.3.

Guitarist Garry Radford teams up with Stephen Hayden to perform Streets of London.

MUSIC ranging from violin minuets to jazz numbers were performed by members of Sutton Centre's music department at special concerts last Tuesday and Wednesday.

The performance was opened by the school band conducted by Jonathan Trout, followed by a vocal and guitar duet by Stephen Heyden and Gary Radford. A violin ensemble, the boys' choir, a brass trio and a dance team continued the entertainment, the there were various pieces of creative work from first and second year pupils.

After the interval, the choir, directed by Meryl Chambers and accompanied by Jim Hill, opened up with three songs. A clarinet and flute duet by Jane Hyde and Kate Leese followed.

Arranged by alto sax player Nigel Turner, the six-strong jazz group took the floor. A reminder that Christmas is just around the corner came in the shape of a carol composed and performed by eight girls. The last individual item came from pianist Paul Mahy before the band played the finale.

virtually everywhere it went. The Music Block's successes had been a steady note throughout the storm and beyond. In 1977 Music had 40 C.S.E. candidates and 7 for 'A' level. The staff led a brass band, a choir and an orchestra. The pupils had a jazzband, a rock group and a string ensemble. *'Centre Sounds'* productions in the Theatre brought them all together and each year was even better than the one before. A sixteen-year-old student had gained a grade A 'A' level each year since he had been fourteen. There was also the phenomenon of Griff.

Those pupils who had begun at 11 years old at Sutton Centre were showing diversity and competence in equal measure. Griff regarded himself as just one of this wave of pupils which was now crashing on the shores of mature achievement. He came from a respectable working home in Silk Street. He always wore a sports jacket and tie. His acuity in argument was legendary. It seemed as if he was never wrong. "*Ah, Griff says so*" was enough to settle most disputes over appropriate facts of the matter.

Griff won a regional debating competition with a ten-minute speech on *'political extremism'*. Tom King arranged for him to give the speech to a full meeting of the County Council. The first mention of Sutton Centre at County Hall (in full session) came with Griff's measured defence of democratic liberties. He went for interview to Oxford Colleges to read law. He accepted the first offer. The second college's interviewer wrote to the school to say that they would have gladly taken him and asked if they could be told of any similar candidates.

Other sixth formers were also offered places eagerly by universities and polytechnics. They had found giving an account of the school a great asset at interview. Indeed, most had a number of offers to choose from. Eleven of the sixth form chose direct entry to higher education and six chose to defer or go into local businesses.

What then had compounded rather than changed was the confidence of the students. They had put their energies into the school's culture rather than a counter culture. The School Council had struggled for a while and then regained its strength. One example of this in action came after the Head had broached the possibility of uniform - or at least made a beginning by the suggesting the adoption of grey jumpers.

School Council responded by *'declaring'* two clothing days during the following week: a *'scruffy day'* and a *'smart day'*. Defaulters would be fined 5p and the proceeds would go to the School Fund. Scruffy Day was a day of horrible appearances, tatty jumpers, torn jeans and generally best forgotten! Smart Day saw teaching areas looking like sets from the "*Boyfriend*"; pencil skirts and Sunday jackets. Not much money was made for the School Fund. Nor were *'uniforms'* an alive issue afterwards either.

The cabaret acts at the end of term had continued to be coded and loaded. The cabaret of July 1979 had been particularly heavy in this respect. There was a respite as there was no great wish for *'an end of term do like that'* for the whole of the following year.

As time passed Tom King was feeling more confident of his grasp of affairs and becoming ever more committed to the idea of a community school. In a 1980 issue of 'Centre News' he wrote:

> *"Learning must be seen as something which goes on throughout life. It must be seen as something that every member of society gets involved in at some level. Desire, easy access and involvement are the key factors....Sutton Centre wants community involvement, invites and welcomes it."*

Part of the confidence gained came from the knowledge that the last of the really resentful staff were leaving. Those who remained were holding their ground and staying because they really believed in Sutton Centre, had local ties and were not convinced that there were really '*better*' schools to go to.

Tom King turned his mind, and that of many staff, to practical matters. He had the County Playing Fields Department attend to the shrubs and surrounds. The pool and waterfall which had only worked for a day before the fountain pump was stolen was filled in and planted. He had partitions erected on the Adult Education Floor which quartered the large space and doubled the teaching area. The Adult Education Floor then had the only corridor in the building but it was much better used by adults and sixth formers. He picked competent teachers who had copper-bottomed references. He promoted from within and steadily drew the teachers closer to himself. He expected people to move on to advance themselves. His approach was practical rather than precious.

Part of the necessity which he saw in this approach lay in the "*new traditionalism*". There was more talk of standards, discipline and employers' needs than there had been for at least a decade. In this view, Sutton Centre was just another school and the rest of it was somehow across the road or on another site entirely. As much as he tried to play a wider role, he was held more acutely accountable for traditional achievements. All else beyond the school was more of an optional extra than ever before. Nevertheless, the school did persist in '*going community*' even if community education often meant parent education as a first priority. The greatest exceptions to this were still Rambling Club, Link Club and the all-purpose Rentaroom. All weekend the sounds from the music block wound round to the market place as the "*Twilight Victims*", for example, exploded into another number.

NEW HOME FOR ARTISTS

A "homeless" group of Sutton artists have found a new headquarters.

A month ago, the Ashfield Society of Artists had to leave their old home at the Miners' Arms on Stoneyford Road, Stanton Hill, and have not been able to meet since, causing them to cancel a number of exhibitions.

But now they have found a new room in which to create their paintings and drawings. It is at Sutton Centre under the rent-a-room scheme which just about comes within their cash budget.

Secretary Mrs Vera Hildreth, who issued an appeal for new premises in the Free Press, said: "The new room has washing facilities and is just right. We are lucky because otherwise we would have been stuck."

Notts Free Press 11.7.80 - p.6.

A further part of this necessity came from coping with the dichotomy of Recreation. Troubles in this quarter regularly sapped energy.

By 1980, no children could go into the Sports Hall at dinner-time without being escorted by an adult - one or two leisure attendants prevented them crossing the barrier. Pupils queued with their ice-skates hoping to catch a teacher coming back down from the dining hall. "*Take us through*" they asked. Problems such as this had to be sorted out and often were.

Car show raises £1,000

A motor show at Sutton Centre Community School was attended by about 2,500 people and raised about £1,000 for school funds.

The three-day show involved over 20 cars, motor bikes, cycles and generators, supplied by local dealers.

Evening Post 25.3.80., p.1.

There were high spots. The aftermath of the first Motor Show is a good example. The school had the use of the Sports Hall over a whole weekend (apart from the bowls hall and ice-rink of course). The P.T.A. set up a stall for food and drinks in front of the servery. Over 30 exhibitors, from car dealers to puncture repair-kit sellers, positioned themselves in the Hall. The centre-piece was a vintage car on loan from the Mansfield Chronicle and Advertiser (the Chad). Thousands of people came. There was so much space that crowds were not a problem. At least £1,000 was raised for the School Fund and it had been, by general agreement, a good trip out. Cleaning up afterwards led to a clash between recreation staff and school, one relying on a memo and the other on a timetable. A good trip out for the public turned slightly sour for the organiser. But the incident did not prevent a second Motor Show.

The teachers' morale noticeably lifted in 1980. The end of term cabaret was revived, this time with T.K. of Sutton - rather than J.R. of Dallas - as its centrepiece. The new course director for English and Literature, in particular, had proved that recent recruits could *'fit in'* from the day of their arrival and express the Centre's style without any difficulty. His promotion to Senior Master was popular and seen as further proof that Tom King supported innovators. He had led the defence of mixed ability groups from 'O' level erosion. His paper finished with:

> "*In English we are able to preserve mixed ability groupings and, at the same time, to introduce 'O' level. It will mean more work and it will mean developing our teaching strategies, but the results seem worth the effort.*"

The Agenda Sub-Committee was back in its '*fearless critic role*' over any slippage in commitment too. Its minutes of December 3rd. 1979, opened with:

> "*There was general disappointment over the vagueness of the Open Committee Meeting on Mixed Ability Teaching and a request for potentially contentious propositions or strong direction from the chair to avoid similar surface-scratching and anecdotal exchange in the future.*"

The intellectual work of stimulating self and Centre criticism was intensifying.

On the 12th January 1981 a fresh statement of "*aims and objectives*" was circulated. The document is well worth reading in full (see Appendix 32) for it listed all items and more which had appeared in the prose of the Stewart Wilson era. The aims included six goals under the heading of the "*Centre as an Institution*" and opened with:

> "*To establish a Peoples' Centre with a commitment to Lifelong learning....*"

The objectives supported common curriculum mixed ability groups and

> "*a discipline which treats students as young adults*".

There were nine items under '*atmosphere*' and eight under the heading '*community*'. The latter included '*community*' in the curriculum, interagency co-operation and:

> "*To make the Centre a more integral part of Sutton-in-Ashfield.*"

In summary, then, the school was increasingly unified behind Tom King. For three years he tried to please employers, staff, parents and his authority. By recognising the interests of each differently he gradually enabled the school to come in from the cold. He steered a course away from the establishment's hostility and towards the completion of his own establishment. Then came the announcement that the lower school block would be completed by Autumn 1981. By that time, the decline in student numbers, due to the fall in the birth rate, would mean the school could give up West Block altogether and just use East Block as a Field Centre - and for Kelvin's group. Kelvin's group was disbanded, in 1982, following a staff decision.

By Christmas 1982 Tom King had been at Sutton Centre as long as had Stewart Wilson.

Events that will last in the memory for a lifetime had found their way back into everyday school life. By the time James Stone retired in May 1981 he could reflect that innovation at Sutton Centre had not really taken that long to come on song. The profound demoralization of the enquiries' months had been overcome.

CHAPTER NINETEEN: - TO 1983.

> *"The problem with Britain....is that there are so many people around who can stop things happening. To have something that can help things to happen is very valuable."*
>
> *Holland* [1]

Tom King called all heads of section together for an open meeting in 1979 to see what common purposes could come from the staff on site. But they each reported a willingness to work together after they had worked separately. The traditional tasks - for which they were being paid and for which there was an increasing need and decreasing budget - came first. Indeed, very few staff were obliged to work for the Centre as a whole. Even the building superintendent had two squads of cleaners: Recreation and Education. And he was the only obvious person to have a Centre-wide job.

The Coordinating Committee was a gathering of *'bosses'* who needed to set out some domestic principles, some agreed matters of good house-keeping, like security and communications' provision (post and telephones). None had staff below them required to link, to liaise or whatever. Such lateral arrangements would have actually run counter to their top person privileges. Thus what was possible Centre-wide was redefined as that which came after everything else, was agreed to first by the top positions and was unlikely to be a regular feature that would rock the boat. In the last two years of the decade such limitations did not leave much scope for initiative and challenging action.

There were two other Centre-wide positions though; one temporary and the other permanent. The temporary post was that of the Research Officer who stored information about each function and who collaborated in studies when asked to do so. Over five years the Research Officer collected the tasks that were either marginal or tedious or to do with the ordinary public. A job emerged; to serve the Coordinating Committee and the Users' Association; to be the first port of call for enquiries; to protect and develop reprographics for the community; to schedule Rentaroom; to enable visits from theatre groups by handling bookings through to posters, to relate the town to the Centre and vice versa. In time, catering and cleaning may also have been included in

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE EDUCATION AUTHORITY and ASHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL

SUTTON CENTRE 1973-8

High Pavement
Sutton-in-Ashfield
Nottinghamshire

Telephone: Mansfield 52171

Head: Stewart Wilson
Recreation Manager: Ken Harlow

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

SUTTON CENTRE SCHOOL 1978

High Pavement,
Sutton-in-Ashfield,
Nottinghamshire. NG17 1EE.

Telephone: Mansfield (0623) 52171

Headmaster: T.King, B.A.,

Your Ref:
Our Ref:
date

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Sutton Centre School 1978-9

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Nottinghamshire. NG17 1EE

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Headmaster: T. King B.A.

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Nottinghamshire County Council Education Department

Sutton Centre 1979-81

Headmaster: T. King, J.P., B.A.

High Pavement,
Sutton in Ashfield,
Nottinghamshire,
NG17 1EE

☎ Mansfield (0623) 52171

---

your reference
our reference
date

Director of Technical Services
F. H. Molyneux
B.Sc. C.Eng. F.I.C.E. F.I.Mun.E.

Leisure Services,
16 Low Street,
Sutton-in-Ashfield
Notts. NG17 1DH
Telephone: Mansfield (0623) [illegible]

52171

ASHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL 1978

My Ref
Your Ref
In reply please quote our reference

Date
Please Contact Mr. K. Harlow,
Recreation Manager,
Sutton Centre,
High Pavement,
Sutton-in-Ashfield.

Nottinghamshire County Council
Ashfield District Council

SUTTON CENTRE 1978-81

High Pavement
Sutton-in-Ashfield
Nottinghamshire

Telephone Mansfield 52171
Bookings Mansfield [illegible]

Recreation Manager Mr. K. Harlow
D.L.C. D.C.E. A.R.M.M.

your ref
our ref
please ask for
date

Eric W. Goacher, B.Sc. (Econ.)
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Workers Educational Association
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38 Wade Avenue
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WEA

SUTTON-in-ASHFIELD TEACHERS' CENTRE

Mansfield 52171

Sutton Centre
High Pavement
Sutton-in-Ashfield
Notts.

Basford Hall College of Further Education

SUTTON-IN-ASHFIELD ADULT EDUCATION CENTRE

Area Organiser:
Mrs. S. M. Lowe, B.Sc., A.T.I., Dip. Ad. Ed

High Pavement,
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Nottinghamshire

Telephone: Mansfield 52171
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THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM

DEPARTMENT OF ADULT EDUCATION

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LETTERHEADS DURING A DECADE

(As others see us,
As we see ourselves.)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

this job. However, the list grew longer for the first four years and then shorter as the Research Officer tried to pass on the pieces with an outline of procedures necessary. The role came together and then went away again as routines rather than as routes for future development.

The other Centre-wide position was that of Chaplain. The second chaplain had spoken for the school more and more forcefully during the Enquiries. He left to become Stewart Wilson's Deputy Head (Community). The Users' Association badgered the Bishop into seeking a replacement and a third chaplain was appointed.

"*Give them hell, but with love*" was the job description according to one of the selection panel. This vital work, though, would be as freelance as the other two chaplains had experienced. No rights, no defined responsibilities, no salary or expenses beyond those of the parish which also came with the job and no room except that which came as a gift from one of the services.

The Chaplain, too, could have been supported by a coordinator rather than depend upon charity. His approach was dog-collar free, informal and taking services or talking about the Centre and his Ministry when asked. He became the Chairman/Secretary of the Coordinating Committee. He was regularly in the Day Centre, Phab Club, Bunker and school and often joined as staff member on trips away. In fact he put in virtually a full week at the Centre and then turned to Parish affairs and Sunday preaching.

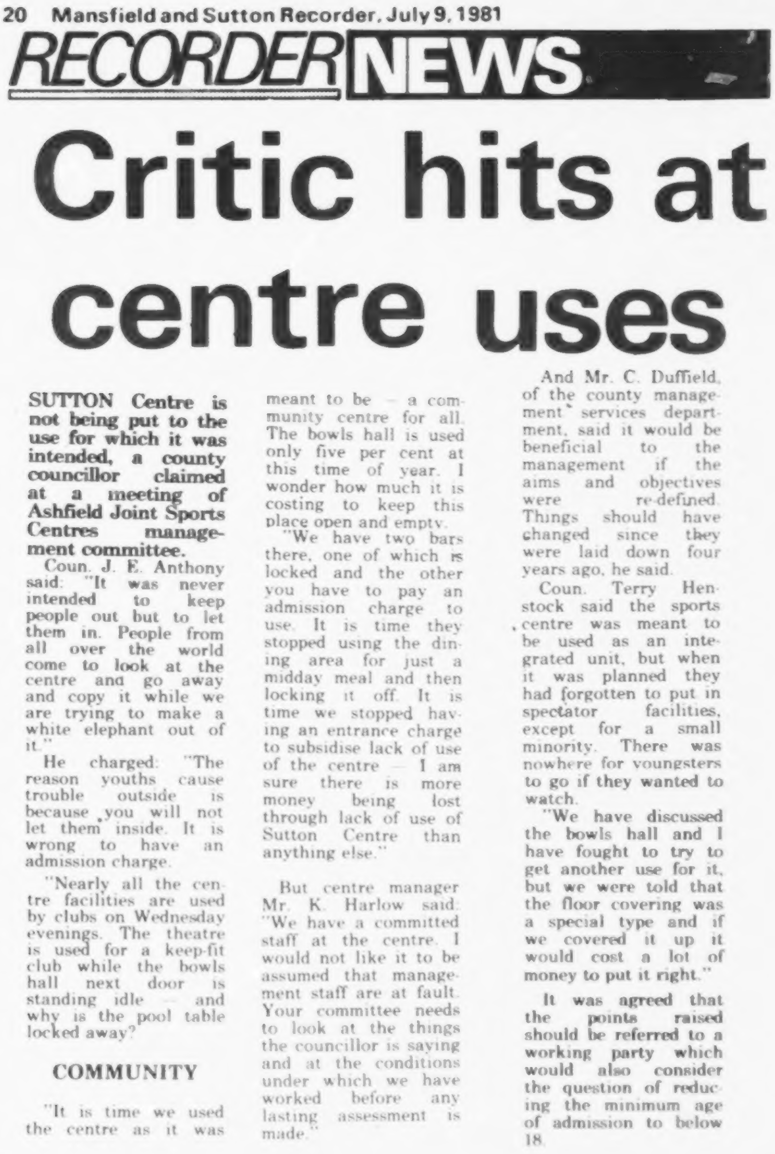
The Chaplain was not obliged to do much, if at all. He could range without hinderance throughout the Centre and so gently remind the more territorially minded that their boundaries were imaginary. The third Chaplain came to be a part of the Centre. Rather than there being a chapel there, a space for which usage could be catalogued and graded, there was the person of the Chaplain - the first to both fit in and gently criticise. The Chaplain's part in the story is threefold. First the building was still open to the unusual, secondly it still attracted those prepared to innovate even when their independence was not secure.

Thirdly the Chaplain's years written of so far arc across the decades.

But there is probably little real truth in describing experiences by decades. (In the twentieth century it has almost become fact that there were the "*roaring twenties*" and the "*swinging sixties*".) Sutton Centre's first decade would be 1973 to 1983 and that period of experience would still only be an introduction to the years ahead. To sense the historical story we must adjust the lens. We must ask what is the connection between the immediate past and the immediate future as distinct from what were the definite stages since the first beginnings. The answer to the latter has already been suggested. By 1983 there had been three periods: moral fervour, denigration and pragmatic development. The relevance of the former question is to ask where has pragmatic development been leading? Has it been effective in overcoming what Specht described as three endemic problems of community education centres: namely "*confused objectives, limiting ideologies and faulty administration*".[2]

Essentially pragmatic development began when Labour was returned to the County Council in 1981. First, the education budget increased, there was simply less stress upon the school. Secondly, the Group were looking for more radical policies than they had pursued when last in office. Sutton Centre demonstrated an alternative to closing schools in neighbourhoods which had dwindling pupil numbers and next to nothing in the way of amenities. The possibility of being a prototype for the County became an alive issue. Thirdly, there was genuine frustration over the Recreation Centre not having worked as well as had been intended. There was more experience of Centres now, that is of the Leisure/ Recreation kind. Two of Sutton's County Councillors were determined to do something.

A process got underway wherein each action had a number of effects. Recreation was closely examined and some motions were quickly passed: a membership card for the 16 to 18-year-olds to allow them to spectate and the servery open for hot drinks and snacks in September 1982. Sutton Centre's older pupils had organised a petition to be allowed into the Sports Hall to watch. One



20 Mansfield and Sutton Recorder, July 9, 1981

RECORDER NEWS

Critic hits at centre uses

SUTTON Centre is not being put to the use for which it was intended, a county councillor claimed at a meeting of Ashfield Joint Sports Centres management committee.

Coun. J. E. Anthony said: "It was never intended to keep people out but to let them in. People from all over the world come to look at the centre and go away and copy it while we are trying to make a white elephant out of it."

He charged: "The reason youths cause trouble outside is because you will not let them inside. It is wrong to have an admission charge.

"Nearly all the centre facilities are used by clubs on Wednesday evenings. The theatre is used for a keep-fit club while the bowls hall next door is standing idle — and why is the pool table locked away?

COMMUNITY

"It is time we used the centre as it was meant to be — a community centre for all. The bowls hall is used only five per cent at this time of year. I wonder how much it is costing to keep this place open and empty.

"We have two bars there, one of which is locked and the other you have to pay an admission charge to use. It is time they stopped using the dining area for just a midday meal and then locking it off. It is time we stopped having an entrance charge to subsidise lack of use of the centre — I am sure there is more money being lost through lack of use of Sutton Centre than anything else."

But centre manager Mr. K. Harlow said: "We have a committed staff at the centre. I would not like it to be assumed that management staff are at fault. Your committee needs to look at the things the councillor is saying and at the conditions under which we have worked before any lasting assessment is made."

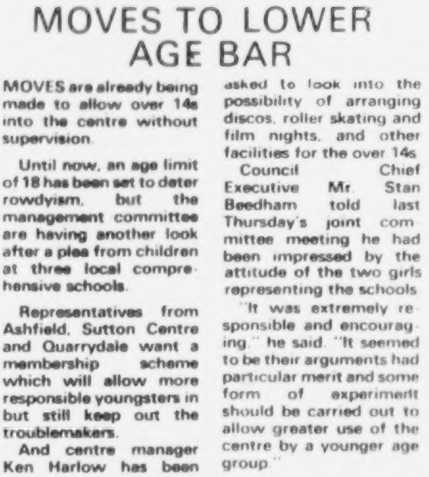
And Mr. C. Duffield, of the county management services department, said it would be beneficial to the management if the aims and objectives were re-defined. Things should have changed since they were laid down four years ago, he said.

Coun. Terry Henstock said the sports centre was meant to be used as an integrated unit, but when it was planned they had forgotten to put in spectator facilities, except for a small minority. There was nowhere for youngsters to go if they wanted to watch.

"We have discussed the bowls hall and I have fought to try to get another use for it, but we were told that the floor covering was a special type and if we covered it up it would cost a lot of money to put it right."

It was agreed that the points raised should be referred to a working party which would also consider the question of reducing the minimum age of admission to below 18.

fact simply startled the officials and councillors. The teenagers had been watching already, but at enormous cost. They had been entering the Ice Rink, paying 32p as a skater with their own skates and then walking through to the viewing galleries above the Hall. They had never been stopped, never *'reported'* and there had been no *'incidents'*. Under 18 spectating had been taking place on a small scale for three years.



MOVES TO LOWER AGE BAR

MOVES are already being made to allow over 14s into the centre without supervision.

Until now, an age limit of 18 has been set to deter rowdyism, but the management committee are having another look after a plea from children at three local comprehensive schools.

Representatives from Ashfield, Sutton Centre and Quarrydale want a membership scheme which will allow more responsible youngsters in but still keep out the troublemakers.

And centre manager Ken Harlow has been asked to look into the possibility of arranging discos, roller skating and film nights, and other facilities for the over 14s.

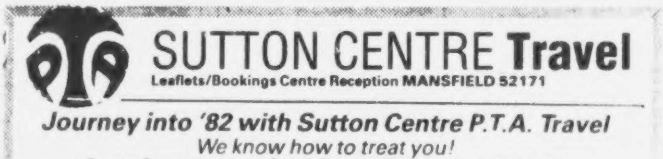
Council Chief Executive Mr. Stan Beedham told last Thursday's joint committee meeting he had been impressed by the attitude of the two girls representing the schools.

"It was extremely responsible and encouraging," he said. "It seemed to be their arguments had particular merit and some form of experiment should be carried out to allow greater use of the centre by a younger age group."

NOTTS. FREE PRESS 20.3.81 p.1.

The ice rink manager quickly moved with the mood of the times. Teenagers could buy ice tickets at Reception and save queuing. The headmaster put a notice in the Bulletin saying that the Recreation Manager had kindly agreed to pupils going to the ice-rink in small groups unescorted - for a trial period.

The '*chromium curtain*" (the territory barrier between the foyer and the sports walkway) was not drawn back altogether. Education users still had no membership of the Centre as such - pupils or adults - and Sutton folk are not inclined to pay a spectator fee to go for a snack. Certainly not with so many town centre snack bars nearby. All the same, pragmatic though the developments were, the changes were all in the same direction: recreation took two steps towards leisure.



SUTTON CENTRE **Travel**

Leaflets/Bookings Centre Reception MANSFIELD 52171

Journey into '82 with Sutton Centre P.T.A. Travel

We know how to treat you!

- Superior Organisation
- Friendly Courteous Service
- Value for money
- Convenient Local Departures
- Modern reliable coaches

Receptionists picked up the relaxation of '*us*" and '*them*" too and thereby hangs another tale. The P.T.A. had become Sutton's foremost travel agency as far as coach trips were concerned. Their motto was "*we know how to treat you*" - low costs, luxury overnight stays and bingo in lay-bys for a break. Miners heard of the next bargain over the intercomm at the face. There was newspaper advertising; tickets were available at Reception. There was no question about it. At this '*level*', Reception took money, gave tickets and displayed advertisements. It was seen neither as an inconsistency nor as a precedent. Not at first that is. The next wrestling promoter just assumed that Reception would sell tickets, put it on his posters and they did: despite the hundreds of transactions which this involved. The root problem emerged - it was a matter of keeping the different monies separately as codes on the cash register had not been introduced beyond the range of sporting events. However, if a tin with sufficient change was supplied.....

John Clayton's replacement in the Bunker struggled with his lot for two years and left. The hard core reduced itself to an even harder core - ironically they were amongst the most loyal Centre attenders at the same time as being the most aggressive and destructive. They had marked the pathway from the Idlewells with their messages one evening (*"Sham Army Rules the Centre"*, *"Crass"*, *"Anarchy UK"* and so on). The youth worker invited them to decorate the Disco walls instead. They did and with the same defiant slogans. But the initiative did not have the desired effect. Graffiti encircled the Centre and enraged the shop keepers. It looked as if the youth worker had encouraged it - as though he wanted to befriend and be like the despoilers of Sutton.

A new *'leader'* arrived in Autumn 1981. He contained the problem and found ways of bringing in the junior element. This was still the Bunker's dilemma, it needed to attract and guide young teenagers as they crossed the rapids of risks on their way to independence. Only by attracting youngsters could the older members be *'promoted'* to the pubs and clubs beyond. The new leader was helped in this respect by volunteer police cadets who organised sports for the young unemployed in Sports Hall time given by the school.

All in all the mood in 1981 became optimistic enough for an *'open day'* to be held. This was a mammoth event. When each section pulled the stops out there was a lot to see and do. Again and again adults from other schools' catchment areas said *"we didn't know it was like this, we didn't know all this was going on"*. The Rentaroom users and eleventh sessions followed the playgroup's fair and absailing down the Theatre Tower's walls. There was an echo of suspended week sentiment - "*it should be like this every day*" said one drama group secretary.

There was always a case which could be made out for the unusual. The very ethos suggested that so much ought to be possible at Sutton Centre. Technicians developed as teachers. Ex-pupils came back to eleventh sessions. An increasing number of unemployed people made their way to day time and evening sessions. Even if "*what we are here for*" was not manifestly clear there was latitude and the liberal response of "*why not?*" to novel suggestions.

One such suggestion came from the Youth and Community Service. There were to be two sets of twelve unemployed young people researching the needs of the disabled during the International Year of the Disabled, half of whom were to be disabled themselves. One team was based at Sutton Centre. During 1981 they challenged the '*tranquility*' of the Day Centre, organised a

Notts. Free Press, Friday, April 24, 1981 9

LIFE IN A CHAIR

Teenagers in project to help disabled

TWO healthy teenagers who found out at first hand what life is like for wheelchair-bound people this week delivered their verdict: "Awful".

As part of a survey to discover what difficulties face the handicapped, and what is being done in Ashfield to help them in the International Year of the Disabled, Richard Townsley and Mick Fell called at numerous shops, offices and public buildings in Sutton and Kirkby.

And the results will eventually be collated to see whether the various appeals have been taken notice of.

Richard and Mick are part of a group of youngsters working under a Manpower Services Commission's special project for young people. They are based at Sutton Centre, and have five abled-bodied youngsters and five handicapped.

Supervising is Garry Jones, himself confined to a wheelchair, and Ruth Parsons.

To start with, they checked a random selection of 80 Sutton stores ranging from the big multiples to small corner shops, checking whether they had wheelchair access, doorways wide enough to take walking frames, and facilities for the partially sighted.

Said Ruth: "It looks as if smaller shops are not going to score very well on entry facilities, but once inside, they provide good service, better than you would find in most supermarkets.

Richard Townley and Mick Fell, helped by two members of the project, seeing at first hand, the obstacles faced by disabled people in Sutton Precinct.

"Some people have refused to see us, but on the whole, they have been very helpful, interested, and rather surprised that we are doing it."

Next on the agenda is work places, schools and public buildings. The project is expected to last a year.

As well as his practical involvement with the group, Richard is also helping to research the legal position over planning regulations to comply with the 1970 Act which requires shop and public buildings to make "practicable and reasonable" provision for the disabled.

To help the Sutton group travel around the area, the MSC have provided them with a minibus specially adapted to take wheelchairs.

They are now hoping to combine with the PHAB Club to make a video film about the local problem spots for the disabled, to be shown to shop owners and managers and local old people's groups.

wheelchair course around the town for important people to gain first-hand experience of being a "*wheely*", put stickers on buildings where access was possible and delved into questions of education and employment. Each activity provoked response and they became more bold as the year went on (although often depleted by '*squad members*' getting jobs). The point is that it was '*obvious*' to them to be based at the Centre in much the same way that it was not obvious for them to be based at any other school or youth centre. The location, the provisions for the disabled and the ethos all suggested that the Centre was eminently suitable. There was no basis for saying no and there would be even less of a case for doing so in the future.

Sutton Centre
Phase IV
Opening in July 1981
County Architect H T Swain
Directing Architect M S Tempest
Directing Surveyor D.W. Hoar
WINSHEL
Building Contractors
Draycott 3821

The school was unified in Autumn 1981. The relief this brought was enormous not least because there could now be a common atmosphere throughout. The West Block was released to become an unemployment centre both practically and administratively. This move brought another initiative into Sutton.

In September 1982 the school also became, at last, fully responsible for Adult Education. The opportunity to integrate eleventh sessions with short courses fell to an environmental studies teacher and the all-purpose C. & R. secretary. They had the flexibility to retain "Pay as You Learn" and to put on extra courses if the demand occurred. In its first term there were over 2,500 Adult Enrolments on top of those in eleventh sessions. Family sessions were boosted and yet more of Sutton's unemployed came "*because it's handy*".

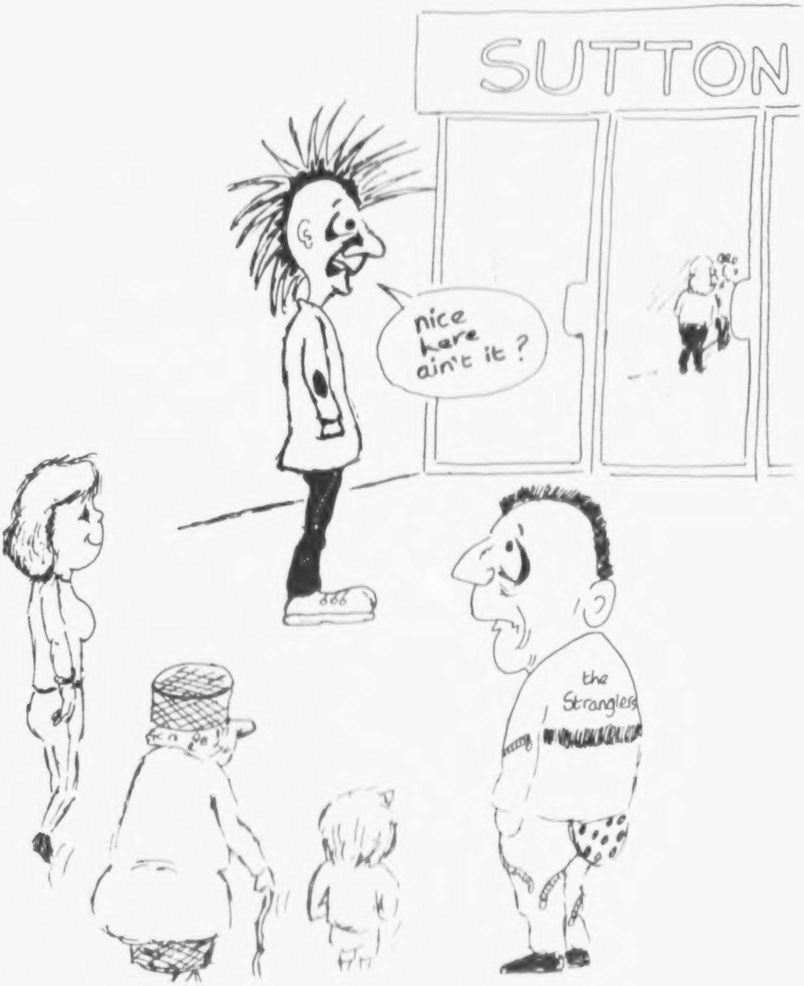
Adult Education proved to have been dormant rather than dead.

The same observation can be made on the preparedness to identify oneself with Sutton Centre. At his retirement ceremony, the Director of Technical Services of Ashfield District Council was said to have been closely involved in bringing the Centre to the town. Then a Director of Leisure Services was advertised for to take immediate responsibility for the Devonshire Suite, Festival Hall and Sutton Centre. Ashfield District Council was putting Sutton Centre higher on its list of priorities. There were protests over the proposed Director's salary in a time of austerity and cut backs. But a Director, with military service and experience elsewhere in the County, was duly appointed.

All these pragmatic moves indicate a renewed will to sort out Sutton Centre for its second decade. They are moves rather than milestones on a long road to community involvement. They come at a less advantageous time too. Many of the earlier initiatives will have to be reinvented during a period when those who are keen and enthusiastic have much more to do. They are also running counter to some of the entrenched positions. There are staff in post who have got used to doing their little bit in their little operation and no more. Divisions of this kind may characterise the next decade.

But inertia and entropy are not all that likely. The partnership between County and District Councils entered a new phase in 1982. Two policy review groups were formed, one of senior councillors and the other of senior officers. In miniature the overall Sutton Centre Council took shape although it was far too distant from officials, staff and users at first. The policy review committees' tasks were to restate the objectives and to reform the administration. After ten years such an overhaul would probably have been necessary anyway. Had a decade of trial and error closed or had a decade of new determination just begun?

It had taken eight years to complete the Centre after it had first been opened. The phasing was saturated with frustrations but at the same time allowed styles to be adjusted and absorbed. It might even have taken ten years for the professional processes to pull alongside each other if the building had been completed before opening. In retrospect, it had taken ten years, too, to change from being a community school to a community education centre.



The Syd. Squad cartoonist's view.

1973 saw the take off as a community school. Other functions followed, particularly youth and community and the teachers' centre. As the school grew in size it extended its influence and increased its cooperative ventures. It lifted the whole complex. But the school had to touch down under hostile fire. Its dilemmas over the Recreation Centre were causing a loss of height too. The school was grounded, although little of its capacity and commitment had been destroyed. Only Probation could gain any lift during the ensuing period. It was the only service not obliged to camouflage for self-defence. Whilst grounded the school adapted further. It learned to go by road. It was less glamorous to be keeping things going rather than starting something new. Six pop groups blasting away in the Music Block throughout the weekend was normal rather than novel. Phab and Link Clubs week in and out hardly raised an eyebrow although the energy and care they needed were just the same if not more. The school learned to be like the little parts of the Centre, to make headway with some stealth and to avoid high profile publicity. This more pedestrian approach made it less of a leader and more of a partner - although it would always be the greatest part. The approach put the Centre functions on the road together.

The decade, then, had different definitions of being a community education centre at each of its ends. At first it was lifted towards such an achievement by a selflessness from within the school. But by 1983 shared experience counted for at least as much as the school's example. The culture of cooperation had become part of the fabric of the building. Those within could see so much further, sense the potential still to be realised and were often their own harshest critics. What mattered to them was what their community education centre should achieve next and their annoy-

Staff room wall

ance at the obstacles was sometimes bitterly felt. What mattered to others - particularly outsiders aware of schools frozen in the ice age of antagonism to pupils and parents and an arrogant apathy towards the community - was what Centre staff took for granted. They started from base lines other places longed to be able to achieve. They could speak of having pursued a developing set of aims for ten years. And having begun before its time, for Nottinghamshire at least, the Centre was coming into a time when it represented the polar opposite to the closing of contracting schools. The lesson learned was that other separate functions should lease space in schools.

Page 296.

FEASIBILITY STUDY: GENERAL AIMS.

- Attract new industries to the area.

- Halt the drift from the town.

- Complement the Idlewells commercial development.

- Build a comprehensive school to serve the central area.

- Opportunities for integration and for the elimination of expensive duplication.

- Offices with purpose designated accommodation in the very centre of the town.

- No perceptible lines of demarcation.

- Enrich the whole texture of community living.

- Help the organisations trying to do something for the aged and the handicapped.

- Adequate facilites for both drama and choral work.

- Bring our schools into the market place where they will be better placed to provide that preparation for real life which education ought to be.

- Link schools more firmly with the life of the community they serve.

- Education made more relevant and also more accessible to parents and the adult world at large.

- Sutton Centre would be unique in this county. It would put Sutton on the map.

FEASIBILITY STUDY SPECIFIC INTENTIONS.

- Some kind of Civic Hall in which dances, dinners and exhibitions could be held.

- The foyer will be more like an entrance to a hotel, the carpet, the receptionists: an inviting atmosphere all directed towards making everyone feel welcome...
  It should be possible for a member of the public to make use of the Centre for a meal, for a cup of coffee for a chat....

- Coffee bars and dining areas will serve the school and the adult community alike, while it will be impossible to say where the school facilities for physical education and the sports centre begins.

- No separation between the social and recreational provisions for young people who have left school and for those of the same age group remaining at school; no division of young people into sheep and goats.

- There would be great profit to senior pupils if they were able to attend a day-time class provided mainly for adults.

- Serious adult students might participate in classes originally provided for senior pupils.

- If young mothers with children below school-age are to enjoy day-time adult education their young children must be taken care of whilst they attend classes. A crèche to meet this need would offer a most valuable opportunity to involve senior girls.

- The aged and physically handicapped would appreciate visits from younger people who would talk with them, read to them and, most important of all, keep them in touch and make them feel they were not forgotten....a permanent opportunity for very worthwhile community service for the young people of the school and youth groups.

- A sustained programme of health education for school and adult population alike.

- A satisfactory environment achieved by careful landscaping.

- Ample opportunities for frequently changing exhibitions within the central concourse.

- The first part of the school for 750 pupils aged 11 - 16, must be in operation by September 1973.

CHAPTER TWENTY: THE ISSUES RAISED.

> *"Whether we observe the growth of a living cell or of a human soul or of an historical period, we see that growth is gain and loss at the same time; it is both fulfilment and sacrifice."*
>
> *Tillich*[1]

This version of events was seen with one eye upon a document, The Feasibility Study. The aspirations of its authors were raised to the status of aims in an attempt to guage how far they had been realized. As the story unfolded, however, there was less and less reference back to the document. It became apparent that some achievements fell short, particularly those of coordination and management. Other achievements were attained. Integration of the Day Centre, for example, was not at the expense of its independence but at the cost of taking so much into its allocated spaces. And further achievements moved on from the Feasibility Study. Eleventh Sessions were more than a case of adults going into school classes. They were intergenerational activities in which all participants were learning by choice. The Coordination Committee and the Users Association were both formally powerless and fragments of participation.

Thus the device of depending upon the Feasibility Study must finally be rejected. It had served a purpose by being a point of departure for the two headmasters who often referred to it in their early years. But the Study was therefore behind them rather than a beckoning beacon beyond. It was the argument for making a building: a milestone which grew more and more detached by historical distance.

The key issue is that the building did make things happen. It is not just that the 70's has been seen through the windows of one of its progeny. The building put the town on the map. It was a theatre from one outside corner to another. Professional dramas ranged through its floors. The town's own conflicts were acted out with the School and Recreation Centre and Bunker as their stage.

So many issues were tested by the sense of innovation which the building so strongly suggested. So many strains were created by the layering of conflict, collaboration and cooperation. The building explicitly demanded that dialogue and debate take place within and about it. All institutions need to sustain a minimal level of debate over their priorities. The building achieved more than a minimal level as the intensity of both conflicts and collective efforts continuously show. What then, is the significance of what happened? What embers did the architecture quicken into flame? I have in mind two sets of issues; those posed by the building itself and those, like dramas, which were prompted by it. These issues do not always remain separate in the following account.

At the top of a list of issues which were prompted would be that the quality of partnership between the County and District Councils were severely strained by local government reorganisation. This trauma increased the strains which the Centre was bound to cause. When neither officials nor councillors were actively involved chronic problems were passed onto Centre Staff. The Centre had special needs. Normally single, separate establishments, be they schools or day centres, can be dealt with as a job lot and their activities administered by set procedures. Activities at Sutton Centre required that these *'standing orders'* be suspended, that an ad hoc flexibility be applied and that new procedures be devised if the activities proved successful.[2] Such counter bureaucratic tendencies did not always meet with official sympathy and they often set official against official within and between the two Councils.

Elected members did not necessarily enjoy being reminded of special needs either. They were used to sitting on many committees and holding a clutch of governorships. The demand to become more involved did produce some really strong loyalists. But it also produced resentment amongst some who thought that *"Sutton Centre ought to just get on with it like the rest of them!"*

As it was, neither officials or elected members changed very often. If there had been a spate of career moves and electoral casualties progress in accommodation and encouraging innovation could have been very slow indeed.

A focus of another kind was that Sutton Centre's management nearly always mystified its visitors. They would ask "*who's in charge?*" and "*what happens if there is a disagreement?*" The authorities had chosen not to appoint a '*supremo*', and there was no means of banging heads together. Each of the heads had independence and the option of cooperation. They could get on with their job without interference. A subtle alternative had evolved. A coordinator was called for to care for the building as a whole and the innovations which had sprung up. The coordinator would have, in fact, been responsible for most of the events which could go wrong. The coordinator would often be in conflict with every head and possibly the whole Coordinating Committee. A coordinator, however, would lack the power of an overall Director, even if he or she was an embodiment of the Centre - one in whom its duality and multiplicity were fused.

A deeper argument upon the same theme has to do with how all these parts respond to divisions within their own professions. During the seventies each of the parts took a position upon what their profession stood for. The school aimed for awareness, confidence, creativity - taken altogether a form of political literacy. The Bunker aimed for its members' independence; the members had to create a club between themselves. There were questions of sport versus leisure in the Recreation Centre, questions made more pointed by the expectation of a financial return. The contrast was not between free services and usage charges. All parts made charges sometime. The difference lay in whether the Centre was a social centre with a mission or a managed public facility.

In some ways the divisions within professions were mirrored one to another with little distortion: a club is a good or bad thing, young people either need respect or they need discipline. In other ways the professional languages made dialogue nearly impossible. There were simply so many words to describe

the same people: clients; users; pupils; customers and so on. The issue at the top - what is management? meets the issue at the bottom - what is an ordinary member? Another way of thinking about the problems of control is that the more people there are who have a stake in the place the fewer flash points of control problems will occur.

A building like Sutton Centre begs the question of membership. Its location asserts a claim to serve its townspeople as members of one or more of its parts and thereby as members of the whole. The school advertises its 11th Sessions as Family Sessions and The Recreation Part declares itself to be "The Family Centre". But there is no family membership nor any individual membership (beyond the 16 to 18's, whose card signifies them as being *"adults with L Plates"*[2]). In effect, the youngsters' petition could be the first of many until, that is, universal membership has been claimed and achieved. Membership would ask for just the kind of flexible accounting already referred to, discounts for classes, courses, spectating and so on.

The issue of membership refers to a common identity to the Centre as well as to the member. The Centre's image has never settled into a single frame. There was the mention of a secular cathedral. Then there was being on the edge of the market place and thinking of members as if they were Saturday *"punters"* out for a bargain. (This is a dangerous idea, too, because members are reduced to being consumers, not participants nor even learners).

There was also the *"hub of the wheel"*; a good concrete image but not one which made the Centre's purposes clear. The only identity which the Centre could have is that of a community education centre. Community education centres serve all ages equally but differently, extend facilities as local resources and encourage participation in the problems of priorities and control.

To do this, an equal value is placed upon inter-agency cooperation to that which is given to traditional, that is separate, concerns. The point is this: every institution, function or human group can have three sets of values, traditional, innovative and cooperative. For example, a traditional value of schools is to teach children; a cooperative value is to have local people as teachers and local matters as the subjects taught about.

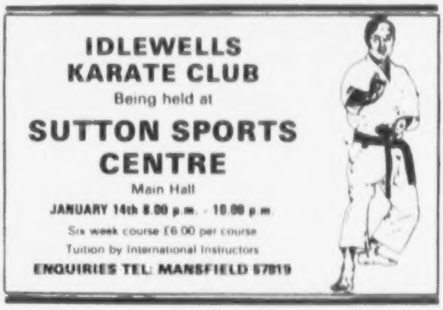
Each one of Sutton Centre's parts had its older or traditional set of values. Quite probably they had the idea of "*look after*" in common; expressing care as both protection and the achievement of skills. Traditional values seek improvements in the quality of care and the quantity of achievements, which, require more equipment or training or staff.

All Sutton Centre's parts were asked by the Feasibility Study to be prepared to be traditional, innovative and cooperative. The ideal was quite simply that all three values help and inform each other. Sutton Centre's parts were being challenged into a chemistry of values different from being just a school, an adult education institute or what have you. Whether the partners liked it or not there would be more to their job; more expected of them for a long time to come. They were put together in the hope that they would work together and that this would be reflected as a contribution to assuring a future for the town. It is the arrangement of goals that represents the real challenge in and from community education centres. The strategy is simultaneously to pursue the goals of traditional achievement, innovation within the function and cooperation between the functions. At Sutton

Centre such an identity emerged rather than having been imposed.

A larger issue than that of name or title is that of publicity (for the first four years the Press made spirited guesses at names and descriptions anyway). Yards of newsprint on Sutton Centre accompanied its early days.

Even if it sounds churlish to say so, there was too much publicity. It had the highest profile imaginable and this undoubtedly incensed its critics. The community within the school did not need any encouragement from the Press. It actually went against the grain of the timidness of the respectable working class. There was a tendency to describe tender new shoots as magnificent blooms. A lower profile would have made fewer enemies, suited those new to sharing in learning and more accurately depicted the successes which could have been justifiably claimed. The media were not consistent nor would it have been realistic to expect them to be. With each head acting as their own publicity machine a flood of '*goodnews*' too soon was practically inevitable. Yet a steady trickle would have done just as well and been less likely to provoke reaction.



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"Incidental Publicity"
January 1981.

Once or twice some of the really significant results have been touched upon. First there was the huge reduction in what are called '*pathology indicators*'. Juvenile delinquency, truancy, vandalism, explusions all happened less frequently than they did at '*usual*' schools and civic buildings. Attendance at school, for example, remained at well over a 90% average from the day the school opened. Yet this was the only rate of this kind ever directly aimed for. The rest were consequences.

They were rivers of results into which quite different tributaries flowed. There was the regular exercise of care for the building and changing its colourful displays. There were no neutral spaces, no corridors to act as unadopted roads to privately maintained territories. There were all the activities going on day and night making sneak damage a distinct risk. The town centre location and public walkways added to the exposure which an ill-wisher could expect. As if to prove all these points when the going got rough in the Bunker its attackers did so from within and contained their destruction to their own space. Every music block window - just three metres from the Bunker's edge - is intact in its original fitting. The Centre had few defences against a public who did not identify with it. Attacks on the fabric had been rare until 1977. There followed a slight, but significant, increase but only in certain areas. Vandalism was far from mindless, it was a coded message delivered with the delicacy of a club. Part of the code could be found in areas where no vandalism occurred, the maths area and the theatre had never been "*attacked*".

Graffiti and vandalism are often taken to mean the same thing but they do not. Vandalism is against the symbol of another, graffiti is making a claim with a symbol of one's own. Claiming territory can be done decoratively or dismissively.

The significance of vandalism and graffiti occurs in lots of ways. They show the targets, the disliked and the protected. They occur at certain times and spotlight weaknesses. At first they seem a million miles away from the big issues like management and finance but they are not. Vandalism and graffiti are one way of gauging how well liked a piece of public property is. A community education centre exists to be liked, to be adopted by the people it

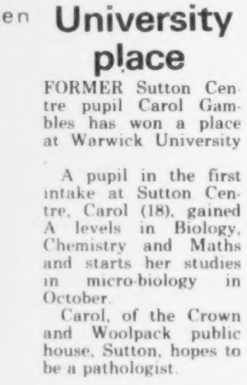
CANCER CURES SMOKING
FIRE
GRAFFITI
SET

School "Graffiti" 1981

serves. The less they use it, the more they attack it, or tolerate its attack, and the more has to be spent on maintenance. Put bluntly it seems obvious that vandalism was not a criticism of "*them*" but of "*us*". Of course, those responsible had to be punished but why had they wanted to punish "*us*" in the first place?

Such matters as a low level of vandalism were hard to give publicity to for fear of becoming a self-negating prophesy. Unless carefully handled "*pathology indicators*" are an incitement to riot. Furthermore they are actually the lowest common denominators of achievement. The highest common factors relate to the social sense about which the Feasibility Study spoke - like the sheer social complexity of the night for Neil Keightley, for example. This whole study has tried to tune into such social indicators: the Bath Push to Skeggy or the Pancake Race; suspended weeks or coffee bar volunteers; the crèche's creation or the adult education floor swap. All in all, the sheer buoyancy of being at a good place to work and learn and recreate.

In between these bottom and top measures come those of traditional achievements; the sewing in the Day Centre; the C.S.E. and A level success rates; the sports achievements and so on. Such matters should neither be spurned nor regarded as sacred. They are the very stuff of the Centre. Had they not been achieved then little else would have been possible. They are like the economic criteria which were met from the beginning. Because the building saved money it was possible to create the chance for all the other things to happen.



University place

FORMER Sutton Centre pupil Carol Gambles has won a place at Warwick University

A pupil in the first intake at Sutton Centre, Carol (18), gained A levels in Biology, Chemistry and Maths and starts her studies in micro-biology in October.

Carol, of the Crown and Woolpack public house, Sutton, hopes to be a pathologist.

NOTTS. FREE PRESS
5.8.80, p.6.

Economic sense pervaded the building. It cost far less to build and less to run than would separate establishments. Two possibly unforseen ingredients furthered the savings. First when a service expanded it could negotiate space far beyond the Feasibility Study's calculations. The multi-use of the Teachers' Centre could hardly have been predicted upon paper. When a service contracted too, space became temporarily available without that service losing its priority rights. Secondly there were fewer *'silly'* expenditures than there could have been. The car park issue could have led to barriers, commissionaires, permit holders and a public effrontery at night and over weekends. However the sense of *'what we are here for'* prevailed and no one head was in a position to push through his or her wishes.

It is a moot point whether all possible savings were made. The federal structure got in the way of thinking about overall efficiencies. There was slack in the Recreation Centre and particularly in the Bowls Hall and Theatre. But that is not quite the point being made here. The failure to develop full potential decreases real income (and real social value) after real savings have been made. Thus a common heating system cost less to install and less to run even if it was not always used most efficiently. This rule particularly applies to the host of minor functions - most of whom had only one external wall. The achievement of economic goals was locked into the building. The school, for example, cost no more to run than a comparable school and spent less in the way of subsequent modifications. That is why the educational and social goals have been the twin focii of this study.

The social goals presented a distinct challenge to established norms of social class, commerce and education. They were radical in the literal sense by driving new channels of communication between neighbours and neighbourhoods; employers and merchants; teachers, pupils and parents. The town was not merely going to be reproduced in its own image. Nor was it going to be soothed into a self-satisfied, static state. Put this way the goals may seem paternalistic and presumptious. *'Attracting new industry'* also means attracting migrant workers as well as employment opportunities for towns-people. On a large scale this would heavily impinge upon the town's social classes and their sub-divisions into housing-class areas. Industrial relations issues would be sharpened if the pupils did indeed become articulate, critical and confident. Lifelong learning would bring families together at a time when the parents may be expecting to drift apart. Good for whom? is the basic question, of course. The opportunities favoured the mass of people as distinct from the elite. It was publicly open to the disadvantaged. One $64,000 question never asked was would the Centre contribute to keeping young people in Sutton or keep some and push out others towards the mobility of higher education? Would the academically able become alienated from their "*community*"?

The conflicting attitudes to youth, to age and to disability were put into combat by the building of Sutton Centre. The biography of the building has turning points made up of temporary successes in each struggle: 16 to 18's banned out as spectators and back in as members; Day Centre members free range to adult education and penned back by fire regulations interpretations. All the time the building proposed the challenge and was passive throughout the struggle.

A fresh statement of purposes was called for which blended the perspectives of the building's potential with the developments of a decade. The briefest of consultation processes would have revealed how aims had been changed or clarified both by experience and by awareness of Centres elsewhere.

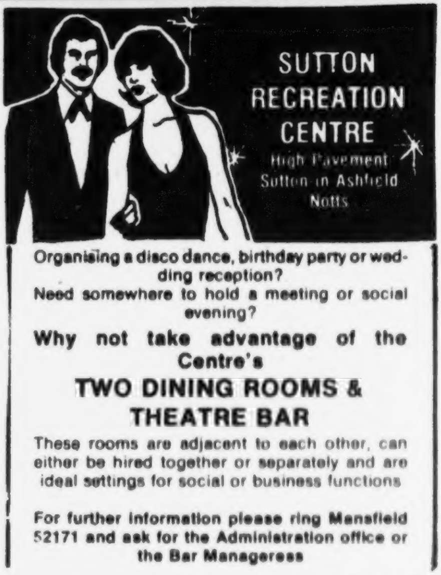
Sutton Centre needed a charter, an embodiment of the rights and responsibilities of its staff and members. The culture of "*priority time*" of "*consideration for others*" and of "*member councils*" was ready to be written. The Centre Coordinating Committee and the Users' Association could have drafted their areas of common agreement. But they needed encouragement - particularly from their off-site superiors. It is asking a lot of people in top positions to suggest that a charter be written. The obvious consequence is that Sutton Centre, and its constituent parts, become more independent. There were times when conflicts seemed rather stage managed along the Machiavellian maxim of "*divide and rule*". Nevertheless, the time had come to firm up upon "*this is what we* *stand for"* and communicate this with fresh enthusiasm particularly to new staff and new members. Constitutional developments could have followed such an exercise just as a charter could become part of the contract package to acclimatize new employees. A charter was needed to bring first principles back into open discussion, to oppose drift with a sense of shared directions. The fact that those who were closest were the most perceptive critics could have been turned to good advantage.

The general agreement that the building stood for something takes us back to the issues raised by the walls and walkways themselves; how well or badly did they serve the intended purposes?

The list begins with seeming trivialities like signs and storage. Sign-posting the Centre was not completed until 1978; it came too late for most buildings would have an obvious main entrance but Sutton Centre never has. There are 36 double external doors! (No local authority worker strike has been applied to the Centre because of the problems of picketing which all these doors cause). Staff and members benefit by being able to come and go at the most convenient point. There never has been a flood of pupils at 3.30pm because they leave from all points of the compass. It is the most demure departure that many visitors have ever seen.

But 'getting in' for the first time can still be a hazardous business. It is unusual to enter a bare foyer on the ground floor and climb a flight of stairs before seeing a sign. (The very climb puts some of the elderly off and they do not always realise that they can use the lift).

The Foyer in 1976.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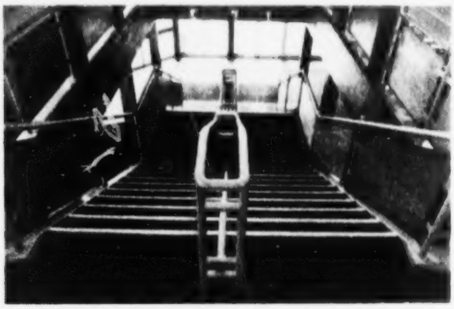
Perhaps this sounds petty but people at Sutton Centre have always been aware of visitors' first impressions.

Deep in the staff consciousness; by way of comparison, is the question of storage and multi-purpose use. The more the uses then the more the storage space needed. Many additional stores have been made, there is even one at the end of the ice rink balcony. Better storage would have prevented one set of conflicts in the crèche. Indeed, the need for storage and the styles developed were master keys for entering into an understanding of what was really going on. Lockers were used as half partitions between through doors in some teaching areas but not in others. The less the storage then the less the use - or the more regular the spring cleaning. Popular crafts, like pottery, were particularly cramped. The hard pressed instructor's only solution appeared to be to put a shed in the quadrangle outside! Storage was created in the sixth form area for voluntary independent learning groups like the Ashfield Society of Artists. It could have been created for many more but then there would have been a tension between encouraging more groups with storage and reducing the learning spaces in which they could meet. There was more flexibility through open-plan: but there was not enough storage space for community education to fully flourish.


The Foyer in 1983 - carpeted, handrails, '*horns*' to prevent sliding and wooden panels.

Whilst multi-use extended to most areas it did not extend to all. When there was single use, like the Bowls Hall, there was under use. Perhaps this is always the case but it is less apparent when there are not immediate comparisons to hand. This area needed alternative activities, promotion and more developed support provisions. The Sports Centre Management Committee did try to tackle the issue but they did not know what alternatives were possible. "*Single use thinking*"sets up a search for more of the same whereas "*multi-use thinking*" seeks initiative.

Motor Show in the Sports Hall 1981.

Multi-use makes great play upon events like the Motor Show. It also puts considerable strain upon caretaking and security. The maintenance staff were willing and able to take extensive use in their stride. They had been brought up to it so to speak. They were not all equally at ease with sponteaeous use nor did they all have the same sense of flexibility over what time people were expected to be out. They were prompted into this by a locking up system which took one and a half hours and a burglary alarm which took twenty minutes to stabilize. They were all less tense before the alarm had been fitted. All the same it was remarkable how far removed from school caretaking they had become. Those who joined in voluntary events and groups were also the ones who said "*that's what we're here for*".

The catering staff could not even begin to make such a claim until 1982. They were either a school meals service or a commercial venture which was leasing space. The takings of both declined and dwindled. One was in fierce competition with town-centre cheap alternatives and the other was dependent upon the trade generated by the Recreation Centre. The will to create a centre-wide facility just did not exist although the Bunker's Saturday market trade and the Ice-Rink refreshment bar showed that the amenity could be profitable.

Contrasting approaches to profitability or indeed to revenue raising were rarely specifically mentioned. The Recreation Centre was expected to take money but its estimates were annually revised downwards. The problem was expressed a different way: how open a competition was possible with the town's firms. The 'bus was in competition with a 'bus company. C. & R. was in competition with a printing firm. Even room lettings for weddings challenged local hotels. There was the feeling, almost like a breeze in the day's weather, that competition should not be too open and explicit. As a rule the Centre deferred and probably lost money it had the right to take. At the same time the public service element was made more apparent. Rentaroom takings more than covered the clerical costs and the caretakers were on duty anyway. Had the charges been more "commercial" some groups would have no doubt found them too high. The revenue realisation was muted for not one but two reasons then, a public service was provided which largely depended upon the rates and local business interests were deferred to as a rule.

There are three remaining questions for which the Centre can provide answers. Was its composition logical, was its construction adequate and was its location appropriate?

By composition is meant the parts and their respective sizes. There was a full-sized comprehensive school and a day centre for 120 members for example. The school pumped round the life-blood like a giant's heart. But was it too big, both for its immediate responsibilities and for its role in the Centre? With 1,500 pupils it probably was too big for both purposes. At that kind of size teachers get locked into departments and barely know each other never mind other Centre staff. As the school reduced to 1,200 there was the distinct impression of it becoming more manageable, more of a human organisation and with very few learning opportunities having been objectively lost. The contrast still stood with the early days, however. With 780 pupils the school had the strengths of informality. Every pupil could be expected to be in contact with their tutor and at least one other member of staff. The impression gained over five years resident research was that the school was more fully developed, and more fully participated, when it was smaller. At the very least there was more of a balance between pupil members and public members.

Location in the Centre was a problem for the Careers Officer and the Registrar. They enjoyed being in the town centre but their presence added little. Nothing would have been lost, except the towns people's and staff's convenience, if they had been left out. On the other hand, a change of staff might bring a change of attitude in which case their being at the Centre is pregnant with possibilities.

Each part could be taken in turn, but for most it was a question of location rather than size. The Bunker by the front door, for example, could have fronted onto the quadrangle rather than the path to the shops. Young people always congregate around their space; they double it by taking as much outside as they do inside. They "*act up*" as a group when stared at by frightened adults.

Ground-floor spaces are always at a premium and are the most suitable for all from the very young to the very old. Could there not have been a grand room swap until all the offices were on the ground floor and all the learning spaces on the floors above? This would have avoided distractions as well as the opportunities for disdain towards busy, mobile pupils. The effect would have been to reflect the Idlewells: shops below, work spaces and storage above. At Sutton Centre removals are possible, a point of departure which single use establishments can barely begin to achieve. The one worry about this is the increase of office spaces which seems to be irreversible. Office making is easily done by "*putting them in there*". Open plan is probably the best and only defence against barring multi-use by making offices of learning spaces (or someone has to defend the value of the space to members as distinct from staff).

The high quality of fittings has often figured in the story told. Adult furnishings and fittings were an essential ingredient. To build the Centre in CLASP was optional and the walls do not look as substantial as brick. Quality matters more with multi-usage, door fittings and carpets need to be more durable. After ten years of hard use the

Centre still manages to look nearly new but wear does make a few parts tatty. The replacement costs will be incurred more quickly; they will have the chance to be met from a number of separate budgets but the negotiations could be difficult.

Idlewells Shopping Precinct - the *'next door'* commercial centre

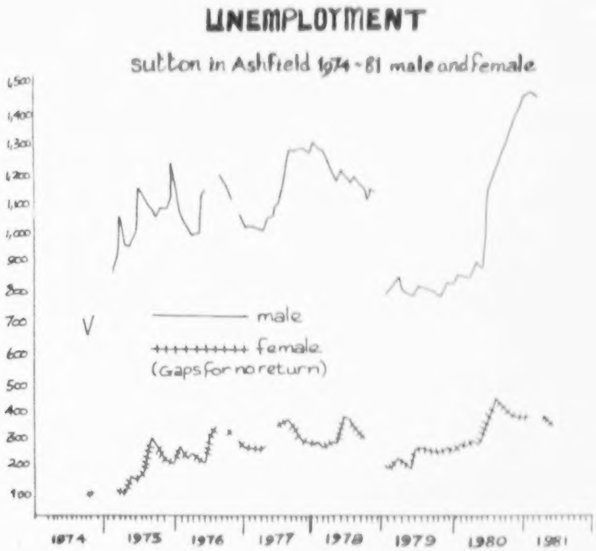
What matters is where the negotiators stand by being for or against Sutton Centre. It can still be a hot potato politically. New appointees to top positions can still be inclined to pull their part out or try to make a "*cordon sanitaire*" within the building. The interesting fact is that such moves have failed in the past and being in the town centre has never been given as a reason.

The town centre location is still as novel as it was when Alan Miekle first thought of it. It worked. In the school's case it was a volatile combination because those traders who did not serve pupils decided, by and large, to dislike it. Staff, in their hundreds, spent some of their earnings in the town - it was most convenient at dinner times - but this did not seem to register, except at garages when people declared where they came from. The decade saw the end of "*cheap petrol*" and the rocketing of travel costs. Being in the town centre gave the building the growing asset of accessibility - a nearly equal accessibility for all towns-people. The pupils will always walk to their shared playing fields. The pupils, and the Sport and Leisure staff, will forever pay the cost of a truly town centre location. And they will always have to be cautious about *'turning the town centre into a playground'*.

Community participation and development [3] are at the seedling stage. Sutton Centre is an achievement of a different kind. It concerns transformations which took place in some parts of the public sector and particularly in the school and the youth service. It has no participative machinery nor does it take on much *'outreach work'*. This has been a story of intra-mural community development. Those who have made advances on other fronts could learn from Sutton Centre and vice versa.

Did the town itself help? What credit is due to Sutton-in-Ashfield and in particular the attitude of its respectable *'folk'*? [4] What part was played by their common sense? To begin with they were not inclined to seek or sustain conflict. To clash in *'scenes'* is out of character in Sutton. Most of the *'beneath stairs'* staff had known each other for years, they know each other's relatives, friends and neighbours. They could soften the blow and take the heat out of a statement whenever they had the chance. They did not see themselves as foot soldiers in their bosses' armies. They were direct and matter of fact about pettiness and waste. Their even-tempered integrity mattered a lot, not least because it was being passed on to their children.

We must return, then, to first principles, to the overarching aim of rejuvenating the town. For during the seventies the face of the town was changed massively. First by the Idlewells, then by Sutton Centre, then by the biggest hypermarket in an established town anywhere in Europe and finally by a DIY self-service warehouse built in what was Searson's three acre yard. Four massive investments in ten years transformed Sutton from a rather run-down ribbon development and historic market place into a nest of markets to which most of North Nottinghamshire came to learn, play or buy. Sutton's declining fortunes were reversed and employment in shops increased tenfold. There were new factories, too, again the most modern and capital intensive on estates which included spaces for the burgeoning small businesses. Unemployment doubled but remained well below the county and national averages.

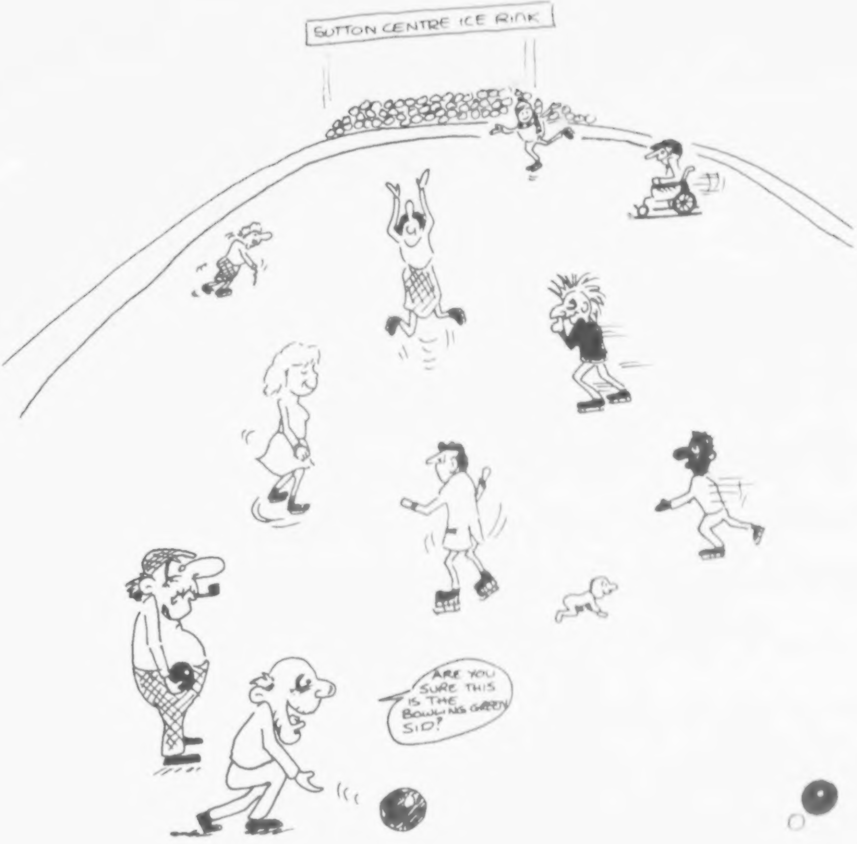


Perhaps these comments give a clue to the greatest hidden pressure; namely to become a hypermarket of corporate life - to efficiently deliver education and welfare to the town's consumers. Few, if any, of the original staff had pursued this end directly. To be sure they opposed waste and wanted to see the building fully used. But they also wanted to engender and spread an attitude of critical confidence throughout the town. They were probably successful because the catchment areas' respectable working and middle class had the same ends.

The decade of the seventies began with near absolute faith in modernity and ended with this being recast into a mould of traditional virtues. Sutton Centre's success was in simultaneously standing for progessive education; inter-professional cooperation; practical public welfare; and sensible use of public property. There are no strong indications that its multiple purposes are being substantially altered. In the process of resolving some of the problems which emerged during the seventies, there will be the opportunity to restate priorities. There is the need to review its present choices. The interesting fact is that a building can do so much, can lead to such an interwoven story as this, if it is in the right place. Sutton Centre is likely to be in the middle of Sutton for at least another fifty years. Properly speaking its causes and effects have only just begun.

This account closes at the halfway mark of a time scale Stewart Wilson had given his staff in 1976. He said then:

> "*Education is one way of changing society for the better. After twenty years the Centre should have improved the quality of Sutton town.*"


SUTTON CENTRE ICE RINK
ARE YOU SURE THIS IS THE BOWLING GREEN SID?

Nottingham Research Reports In Adult Education

Editors: Professor Michael D. Stephens, Professor J.F. Thomas

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Colin Fletcher read Social Science at Liverpool University. After postgraduate research he took a doctorate in Organisational Studies. He moved on to research contracts in health services, industry, and community power. Between 1976 and 1981 he was Senior Research Fellow, Department of Adult Education, University of Nottingham. Following this he became Lecturer in Policy Studies, Cranfield Institute of Technology. He is now Course Tutor for Postgraduate Studies in Youth, Adult and Community Education. He was co-editor (with N.T. Thompson) of *Issues in Community Education* (Falmer Press, 1981). He has written extensively upon Community Education. His most recent work includes a contribution to the Open University Course E 353, on 'Learning in the Community' and an article on 'Community Education and Community Development' for the *International Encyclopedia of Education* (Pergamon, 1984).

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